

**TEXT IS CROSS IN
THE BOOK**

914.7 R91g

Rudolph \$2.75
The great hope.

1252540

914.7 R91g

Keep Your Card in This Pocket

Books will be issued only on presentation of proper library cards.

Unless labeled otherwise, books may be retained for two weeks. Borrowers finding books marked, defaced or mutilated are expected to report same at library desk; otherwise the last borrower will be held responsible for all imperfections discovered.

The card holder is responsible for all books drawn on this card.

Penalty for over-due books 2c a day plus cost of notices.

Lost cards and change of residence must be reported promptly.



Public Library
Kansas City, Mo.

KANSAS CITY, MO. PUBLIC LIBRARY

0 0001 0149149 6

BRARY

KANSAS CITY

MO

FEB 28 '48

MAR 13 '48

MAY 14 '48

JUL 25 '50

MAY 14 '48

FEB 26 '51

JUL 27 '48

AUG 14 '48

SEP 6 '48

OCT 1 '48

OCT 23 '48

MAR 14 '49

FEB 13 '49

MAY 4

AUG 29 '40

SEP 20 '40

THE GREAT HOPE

The Great Hope

BY MARGUERITA RUDOLPH

With an introduction by Pearl S. Buck
and drawings by Abbas



THE JOHN DAY COMPANY
NEW YORK

... COPYRIGHT, 1948, BY MARGUERITA RUDOLPH

... *All rights reserved. This book, or parts thereof, must
not be reproduced in any form without permission.*

Published on the same day in the Dominion of
Canada by Longmans, Green & Company, Toronto.

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO ALL MY AMERICAN FRIENDS

Introduction

IN these days when the two most powerful nations in the world, the United States and Soviet Russia, view each other across barriers of governments and militarism, it is wise for the peoples to remember that behind these man-made barriers human life goes on in the eternal and universal round. Men and women marry and set up homes together, they have children, they struggle to give their children education and happiness. They meet the crises of life as best they can, clinging to one another in love and mutual need, and they die at last. American or Soviet Russian, the human being is the same, the hopes and dreams the same. To remember this is to see beyond the barriers.

This true story of one Russian family, living through the hard years of the last quarter of a century, will help us, who read, to remember. The family, father and mother, children and kin, are living and understandable persons. Fanya, the brave oldest sister, who chose to stay with her beloved Soviet Russia when others came to America, is perhaps the most lovable and understandable of all.

In these evil days, when peace is not yet, it steadies one's faith in humanity to read of such people—yes, and in Soviet Russia.

May the will of the peoples of that country and ours demand and secure peace.

PEARL S. BUCK

Contents

	Introduction by Pearl S. Buck	vii
I	Coming from the Orchard	i
II	A Full House Is Dimmed	7
III	The Cold Winds Came	16
IV	The Home-coming	23
V	Father Wears an Apron	31
VI	Life in Town	40
VII	Father Goes Away	47
VIII	The Family Is Bigger	51
IX	The Great Changes	62
X	The Invasion	75
XI	Tovarishi	83
XII	On the River Desna	92
XIII	The New School	102
XIV	Little Brother's Perilous Adventure	107
XV	Civil War Continued	120
XVI	A Children's Home	131
XVII	The Children's Theater	141
XVIII	A Street Adventure	146
XIX	The Great Offer	151
XX	Leave-taking	156
	Epilogue	166

THE GREAT HOPE



1: Coming from the Orchard

"READY?" Father asked, looking into the deep weather-worn wagon. The four children, ranging in age from five to eleven, were in the wagon among the bags and baskets of apples. The children's clothes and hair were in gay dis-

order and their eyes sparkled. They still felt the joy of the overnight trip in the huge orchard where they had gathered from the ground and plucked from the trees a great variety of apples. Some apples were small enough to hide in your mouth, some the size of a fist, and others you couldn't cover with both hands. Some were to be eaten immediately, some were good for cooking, and some would be saved for winter eating. Father knew exactly which were which, and he knew the names of them all.

The children had sorted the apples according to Father's instructions, and had placed them in piles and in rows on the ground and in special burlap bags, and they had packed them snugly in wooden baskets. Now they were taking them home proudly, rubbing against the bumpy, fragrant bags.

Father slapped the chestnut horse encouragingly on the back and made a clicking sound with his tongue. The horse nodded and jerked and started pulling the creaking wagon. Then Father suddenly stopped him. He noticed a group of villagers talking together sadly, making despairing gestures and pointing beseechingly to the sky. Father took off his hat in greeting and stopped for a while to commiserate with them about the prolonged dry weather and the hopelessly bright sky.

The children leaned over their perches in the wagon and listened intently.

"If the rain doesn't fall, the rye won't ripen, and the potatoes won't grow, and we shall have nothing to eat," lamented a middle-aged man with a beard and a white belted shirt.

"Don't despair, Vasil. We must pray for rain," said the man's wife. "We must all pray to God Almighty and ask for rain and for protection of our *czar-batyushka*. We must

give generously to our priest—give and pray.” The woman crossed herself several times and mumbled.

Father looked at the sky and nodded and put on his cap. He pulled the reins again and walked, then trotted alongside of the horse. When the horse’s pace became steady and the big wheels rolled on in the dusty grooves of the road, Father jumped up on the rattling wagon in front of the children.

Eleven-year-old, pensive, gray-eyed Fanya peered into a basket, her long chestnut braids dangling over the apples. She took a hard greenish one that had a leaf still clinging to the tough stem. It had just the right tartness to suit her. Then she put the apple back and sighed. Seven-year-old, timid, dark-complexioned Vinya watched her sister intently, observing details with adoring eyes, and she also sighed. Vinya sensed her sister’s thinking of the peasants’ complaint. She, too, felt their worry about the crops, and she also wanted to know how prayers would cause the rain to fall. But she didn’t dare ask Fanya about it—she knew that somehow it wasn’t right to question praying. Vinya shoved closer to Fanya.

“There is a little cloud in the sky,” said Fanya, placing one hand on her sister’s shoulder and shading her eyes with the other.

Six-year-old, vivacious Mulik wriggled himself closer to Fanya also.

“Let me see!” he said eagerly, his dark eyes shining with curiosity. “Do you think rain will come now? You said that rain comes from clouds.”

“Only when the clouds are full and heavy,” Fanya answered patiently.

“Tell me more,” Mulik pleaded. Vinya and Mulik ex-

changed sympathetic, expectant glances. They both thought their older sister knew everything, for she had finished the four-year village school, had read every single book there, as well as all the old, heavy books at home. They felt that her knowledge was inexhaustible, and that it was wonderful to listen to her.

"Tell us a story now. Just one!" Mulik persisted.

Fanya smiled, but shook her head.

Here, five-year-old, light-haired Zelik joined his brother's plea with a rhythmic singsong and bodily movements that reached such proportions that Father had to call, "Whoa," and not to the horse.

"I'll give you the ripest apple in the world!" Zelik offered bigheartedly.

"You don't even know which is the ripest," Mulik contested. Each of the boys then took from the basket a seemingly ripe, yellow apple, and each claimed to be the authority on ripeness.

"Hear mine!" insisted Mulik, shaking the apple as if it were a musical instrument. The ripe, loose seeds inside rattled softly.

"But feel mine!" argued Zelik. "There! It's soft all over, isn't it? And I didn't rub it."

"Well, then let's see," Mulik challenged. "Let's break the apples and see." Then Vinya joined the boys, helping them break the apples exactly in half along the stem to see which of the seeds fell out most easily and were the blackest.

"They are both ripe," Vinya decided, and both boys offered their apples to Fanya. Fanya took them, laughing.

"These are perfect, but I don't like sweet yellow apples, I like sour green ones." The boys looked disappointed, and were about to start another contest, but Fanya stopped

them. "I don't want an apple now, and I don't feel like telling a story—I will another time."

"I wish you would," Vinya said softly, sliding to a different position in the wagon, her dark curls and tangles bobbing all over her head. Fanya pushed back her braids, and looked dreamily at the passing fields of dwarfed, scorched crops. She watched the barely visible patch of forest on the hillside where she had gone mushroom picking not long ago, and she hummed a song. Vinya was looking at the waves of dust rising from under the wagon wheels and at the even patches of color in the distant fields of rye and buckwheat and millet. She joined Fanya in the song, as she always did, trying her best to harmonize. She wished she could sing as clearly as Mother, for then her voice would blend perfectly with Fanya's.

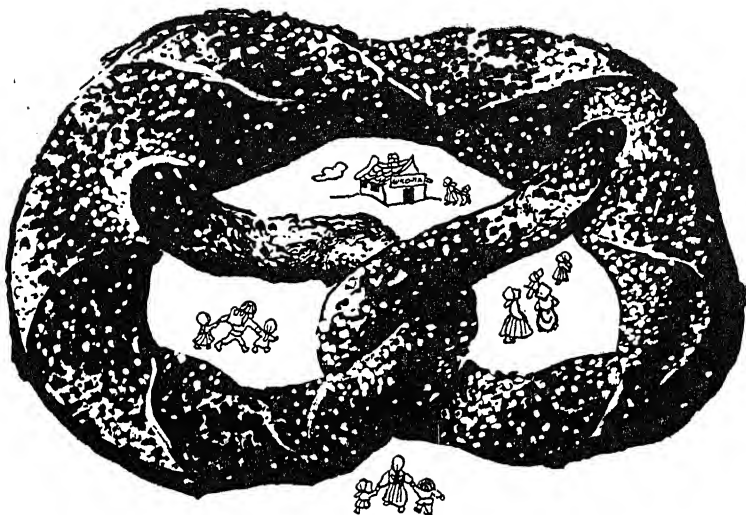
The thought of Mother made Vinya anxious to get home, to the comfortable scraping and sizzling of the pots, to the enticing smell of food around the large brick oven, and the voices of all who belonged there.

The horse was sweating and straining as he pulled the creaking load, and Father jumped off the wagon to give him a helpful nudge. They were approaching their own village now, and could hear the ferocious bark of the miller's huge dog, as he paced on the scraping iron chain. Soon they noticed that neighbor Marina's chickens were scattered dangerously on the road, clucking almost under the wheels. Mulik and Zelik got off the wagon and shooed them into the safety of their yard. Marina, with a kerchief tied under her chin and billowing, embroidered sleeves, leaned over the fence and thanked the boys and praised them as she gave each a handful of hazel nuts. And the boys ran home, ahead of the wagon.

Fanya and Vinya watched the smoke streaming out of the chimneys of the clustering, whitewashed straw-roofed cottages, and pointed to their own chimney smoke.

"That makes me hungry," remarked Fanya. Vinya nodded, feeling her big sister's hunger as if it were her own.





2: A Full House is Dimmed

THEY were home now. The girls ran eagerly through the creaky gate, over the strewn courtyard, into the familiar, dark vestibule, and right in to Mother, who was busy at the stove.

She was especially busy. The full, long sleeves of her blouse were rolled up over the elbows. The usually tidy apron was smeared and spotted and sprinkled, and thin strands of brown hair had escaped from the high pile of hair on top of her head. Mother blew the strands of hair away, and that made her gold earrings dangle and the little rubies in them sparkle.

The big, white brick oven, the brown earthen pots on the benches, the dark pantry mysteriously hiding all sorts of edibles in deep pitchers and well-tied bags, the tables

standing ready, were filled with the sight and smell of food and cooking. There was the delicate aroma of white bread, special for Sabbath, just out of the oven—golden brown, oval loaves, decorated with a crusty braid and sprinkles of poppy seeds. There was the sweet, spicy smell of cinnamon cookies, some of them still in the oven, and a pile of them in a big, brown bowl; they were square-shaped and turned up at the corners like little yellow boats.

"A cookie to sample, Mama?" asked Fanya.

"A tiny little crust of white bread," begged Zelik.

"You must have a special little sample for us," reminded Mulik. "*A bulochka.*"

At that moment, Mother had the roasting chicken out of the oven, and was basting it with the juice from the pan by tipping it dangerously from side to side.

"Move aside, children!" she warned; then in a softer tone: "I have your bulochka—it's under the towel, near the big loaves."

The children attacked the sample at once. They divided the crusty, braid decoration, broke it into four little sticks, and crunched every crumb of it. Then they broke into the fine, fluffy inside, and all, except Zelik, ate it in small bites. He tore into his piece, stuffing his cheeks full and nagging the others for their share, all at the same time.

An hour later the supper table was laid on a starched, white homespun linen tablecloth, with candles flickering in polished brass candlesticks. There was a bottle of vodka at Father's place and with it a silver tumbler. Father filled the tumbler with precision, emptied it promptly, and winced, while the children watched him, fascinated. Mother served Father first, giving him the largest and best portion, then the children's parts, with bones to gnaw on, then anything that was left, for herself. She brought some pickles from



the barrel in the cellar, and served sweet fruit compote for dessert.

When the tablecloth was all mussed and there were only crumbs and empty dishes on it, Father leaned back and started singing in his unsteady tenor. Mother joined, carrying the song evenly in her clear, strong soprano. On the second verse, Fanya joined in, harmonizing with her rich, mellow alto. The other children waited intently for their turn with the chorus, and then joined with gusto. The chorus was repeated softly by everybody, each holding the last note as long as breath would last, but none could hold it longer than Mother.

Zelik was blinking and nodding. Father caught Mother's glance and picked the boy up, and helped him get ready for bed. Zelik moved limply and yawned, and was half asleep, but still he begged for a story. Father agreed.

"Do you want to hear the one about the fly?" Zelik nodded, though he had heard it a dozen times.

"Well," began Father, "there lived in a village a little black fly. She kept herself very shiny and elegant, brushing her coat and patting her face, and keeping at a distance from other flies. And she never cared to work with them."

"The lazy one!" interrupted Zelik, listening intently as Father continued.

"All day long she perched here and there, comfortably. Then she disappeared. The other flies were so busy working they almost forgot about her . . ."

"I know where she was!" interrupted Zelik again.

"Quiet!" whispered Mulik, giving Zelik a push.

"Well . . ." Father stroked his mustache, hesitated a moment, trying to think of new wording for the familiar story. "At last when the sun began to set, the hard-working flies got together for a rest. They watched the village roads.

They saw the large, weary oxen coming home from plowing. And what did they notice on one of the big oxen's back? The lazy one!" Father's voice was ever so critical. "She was perched proudly on the oxen's back, annoying him, of course; swinging and swaying, ever so pleased with herself.

" 'Where have you been so long, sister?' asked the other flies with curiosity.

" 'Oh,' answered the lazy fly with importance, 'can't you tell? We've been plowing! Of course.' " Then Father looked very indignant and the older children were happy to share this indignation with him. Zelik, however, had his own reaction.

"I really can plow," he declared. Father laughed, showing all his strong front teeth and the place where one was missing in the back. Mulik and Vinya hoped that Father, now that he was so relaxed, might be in a mood for another story—a long one. But Father had *important* business to discuss with Mother, he told them. Also, it was time for all the children to go to bed, as soon as the girls washed the dishes.

Mulik and Vinya exchanged brief words, wondering what the "important business" might be. They felt it was something new and different from Father's work, or any business trip.

"You know, Fanya has been so quiet," observed Vinya, who was always sensitive to her sister's moods. "She must be thinking about something special. Maybe she knows what Father and Mother have to talk about."

"Let's ask her," suggested Mulik.

Father and Mother were outside now, talking in low tones. Mulik and Vinya could hear them from the inside, but couldn't make out what they were saying. The children

lay very still on the bed they shared with Zelik. They tried to listen, but Zelik's rhythmic, audible breathing disturbed them. Fanya was slowly getting ready for bed and humming softly. How Vinya loved going off to sleep listening to Fanya's humming! It was even lovelier, more mysterious than Mother's singing. Mulik tiptoed over to Fanya and demanded in a whisper, "Can't you tell us what Mother and Father have to talk about tonight? Vinya suspects you know. Tell us! Or give *me* a hint and see if I can guess. Just a hint!"

"You and your tricks!" chuckled Fanya. "But I do know, and I might as well tell you." Mulik's big eyes grew bigger. With one leap he got to his bed and nudged Vinya. Then they both slid over to Fanya.

"You know of Gomel, don't you?" began Fanya.

"That's the big city where Mother's brothers and sisters live," Vinya said.

"You go there from Repki in a wagon that looks like a house," added Mulik. "It has windows, roof, and a door. Four horses have to pull it. I saw it myself when I was in Repki at Grandmother's."

"Don't get so excited," whispered Fanya. "You see, next week I am going to Gomel. I honestly am!"

"Why?" asked the other children in one voice.

"Father is arranging for me to attend school there. I am really going to study and learn many things in a big school!" Fanya said excitedly.

"Will you go to a gymnasium," asked Mulik, "and wear a uniform?"

Fanya nodded. "I'll have to follow many rules and regulations, and Father will have to pay dearly for the school—but I want to have an education, and there is nothing I can learn in the village or in the small school in town."

Vinya and Mulik both knew that gymnasiums were resplendent city schools, which were for the rich and the smart. It must be frightening to go to such a school, thought Vinya, but she knew that her older sister was much braver and more clever than she. Vinya felt somewhat hurt by this difference, knowing it might grow even more if Fanya went away. Would she really go away?

"Where will you live in Gomel?" Vinya asked in a subdued voice, stifling a sigh.

"I will live with Mother's sister, the one with red hair, the pretty one. But, of course, I have to pass all the examinations before I can be sure of going to the gymnasium," Fanya told them.

"How soon . . ." Vinya started asking, but couldn't pull her voice out to finish the sentence.

Vinya hated to have anyone leave home. She remembered how, when she was a baby hardly two years of age, she would cry in despair when Mother went away from home on an errand, and then how she would sob with gladness at the sound of Mother's returning footsteps and the sight of her big dark shawl, which Mother would take off when she entered the house. She remembered, too, feeling sad when Father would drive away to Repki on business—she'd watch him till the last whiff of dust settled behind the wagon wheels. And how wonderfully safe and secure she felt when she heard the horses' neighing, and that invariable bugle sound coming from Father blowing his nose! She would run quickly out to behold Father's thick mustache and his familiar, dusty boots. Ah, it was good to have Father home again!

Vinya lay awake thinking. Now this terrible home-leaving was breaking in on the family, and there was nothing she could do to stop it. "Maybe Fanya won't go," she told

herself. "Gymnasiums must cost lots of money. Fanya even mentioned it. Father can't be rich. No, he works all the time. Rich people have fancy ways and idly command others. The fat baron who walks around his huge estate with a whip in his hands, while the peasants do all the work and take care of his horses—he is a Rich One. Also, the peasant Havrilla, who lives in an enormous house in the next village and rents his orchards to Father, he is a Rich One. Father picks fruit for him, while he, the Rich One, trots around in a clean white shirt and new sandals. But Father isn't like any of them. Father isn't a Rich One. Then where would he have the money to pay for the gymnasium? No-where! Fanya won't go."

Father and Mother were still talking outside, but in more leisurely tones, and interrupted by yawning. Vinya strained to listen.

"I wonder if we should tell the other children about Fanya's going away?" asked Father.

"Well, you know how fond they are of their older sister—they'll just cry about it—wait a few more days before telling them," Mother answered. "I hope when *they* are old enough for school, they won't have to go far away from home." Then she added, lamenting, "And to think of it—we must use *all* our savings to pay for one child's education—all the savings of five years!"

This puzzled Vinya. "Saving money!" She wondered what exactly it meant. "Perhaps when Father spends hours arguing with other merchants about buying or selling cattle and grain, and when he figures aloud, clanking the little wooden wheels on the abacus—perhaps that is saving money, although there isn't any money to be seen. Father is always so much in earnest about those doings, and now is

giving all these savings for Fanya's school. . . ." Vinya listened again.

"How long will such conditions last?" Father asked. There was denunciation rather than a question in his voice.

"I hope things will change," echoed Mother, "so that all our children will have a chance to go to school."

"But Fanya, especially," said Father. "She is so eager for schooling, and she reads everything she can get."

"And she is always thinking so much," added Mother. "She must get an education. She might even become a teacher!"

Vinya listened to this amazing talk about Fanya's future. Still, she herself hated the word "school." It meant a cold, distant, strange, forbidding building. It meant leaving home, and spoiling it. For to Vinya, home was a full house, with all the family together.





3: The Cold Winds Came

WHEN Fanya left for Gomel, the other three children felt that dullness descended on everything. The autumn rains came, beating down on the little windows. Black sink-

ing mud filled the village. It pulled and clung when people stepped into it. It engulfed them. The cold winds came crying. The fields were bare—not a trace of the bright, soft summer, not a blade of grass. The women were beating out the flax in preparation for the winter spinning, and it sounded like rattling skeletons. Occasionally, a dim echo came from the clap of a hand thresher in some distant threshing barn. In the evenings the sheep bleated sadly. The horses neighed irritably in the dark, locked stables.

Funeral processions were frequent in the village, and people came out to watch them. At the head of the procession was the long-haired, be-robed priest, wearing a heavy, glittering cross, and behind him the deacon, intoning. The men quickly took off their hats and crossed themselves and bowed. The women crossed themselves many times and bowed lower. Everyone watched the carrying of the swaying casket and listened to the sobbing laments of the grieving relatives. The village children were always fascinated by the mournful scene, then ran into the house, wanting to hide, so death wouldn't come slinking after them.

The death of a baby was quite common in the village. It happened in every family. The children had often heard Mother tell of their baby sister's sickness and death.

In the autumn, baby funerals were more frequent than ever. Vinya and Mulik always followed them, almost out of the village. Whenever a man carried a new, little wooden chest on his shoulders, and a woman walked behind with her face in her apron, that was a baby's funeral. Vinya stepped close to hear the woman's intoning words.

"O my precious one, my joy,
You were my happiness, my baby son.
Oh, your sister is ailing, and your brother's hired.

My soul is aching, my heart is tired.
God, why do you punish a suffering wife!
Oh, could I but cure my babe, I'd give my life. . . ."

The woman continued on and on, reciting the miseries of her other children's sickness and death—irrevocable death. Vinya and Mulik became weary of listening, and ran home.

"Will you be scared of ghosts tonight?" whispered Mulik.

"No," answered Vinya, "I am only scared of ghosts when I see a grownup's funeral. I don't think dead children ever haunt people." Mulik agreed with that.

It was gloomy at home, too, in the autumn. The children could see that Mother was pretending to be gay, as she kept busy from morning till night, pickling and preserving things for the winter. Other women from the village came to consult Mother about amounts and kinds of herbs to use in pickling, and brought some samples in jars. Food had to be preserved and saved with great care so there would be enough to eat till the next crop. People talked worriedly about the bad potato crop and about saving enough for seed.

Mother was getting ready to close up a barrel of pickled apples, while the children watched her in the musty cellar. With their arms, the boys measured the barrel that was much higher than themselves. Mulik jumped around it as if he were going to jump in, and Zelik was actually climbing in before Mulik and Vinya pulled him off by the seat of his pants. From a bin in the drier part of the cellar came a fragrant smell of hard winter apples. Vinya ran to it, bending over and taking a deep sniff.

"Are these for freezing, Mama?" she asked.

"No, Father is going to wrap those carefully for keeping fresh."



"But aren't we also getting a supply of frozen apples this winter?" asked Vinya. Frozen apples were Fanya's and her favorite.

"We certainly are," Mother answered. "There are four baskets of them in the pantry near the house." Then she changed her tone of voice. "Run along and play now. I have to pickle the pears."

Pickling was a very mysterious process to the children. Peculiarly shaped and scented herbs and spices were taken out of tiny, secret packages, and handled as if they were magic. And all the measuring and counting and spilling and remeasuring that Mother had to do! Vinya only looked on enviously from a distance, wishing she were big enough to do it.

Vinya and Mulik had a few chores of their own. They went to the well for water, carrying a bucket on a stout yoke. They took turns sweeping the floor with a coarse twig broom, and Vinya fed the chickens, throwing an apronful of grain to them. If Zelik were around, he'd grab the grain from Vinya and eat it himself. "That pig Zelik!" Vinya would squeal exasperatedly, and call Mulik to her rescue, and finally the chickens would be fed.

One of their favorite games was the rearrangement and enlargement of their matchbox collections and the making of designs and buildings with them. They also assorted and made displays of their treasure of candy wrappers. These were printed with portraits of all sorts of famous men; poets and musicians and generals. Vinya and Mulik had hundreds of portraits. There were duplicates of some of them, and these were kept separately. Vinya had a whole dozen portraits of the poet Pushkin, and Mulik had a collection of animal pictures.

Often, Vinya left Mulik alone with the candy wrappers

collection and went to play with her rag dolls. She made the hand-size dolls herself, by rolling a piece of cloth for a body. She tied some clothes on it with thick thread from Mother's spindle. It was simple to dress such a doll, because the doll had no arms or legs. The only difficulty was wrapping up in cloth and tying onto the upper part of the doll two big-sized peas, because the doll represented a woman.

The other girls in the village played with the same kind of dolls, and sometimes Vinya joined them. She only wished she could join the village children as often and as freely as she liked. She wanted to be truly one of them—not just living next door, isolated from them as she was. Although Vinya played with breasted mother-dolls and swaddled baby-dolls as did the village girls, gathered wild flowers and made mud pies as they did, enjoyed a pleasant hair-combing and delousing, administered by Mother outdoors in the spring sunshine, and talked and sang as they did, Vinya knew she was considered different and inferior by the Christian children in the village. Yet Vinya did not resign herself to isolation or to playing exclusively with her sister and brothers; the struggle for participation and for at least partial acceptance led her to various strategies. She carried in her skirt pocket a secretly saved morsel of sugar or white bread or even candy. These she'd offer, with seeming spontaneity and sheer good nature, to the flaxen-haired Paraska and dark-eyed Nastya, before settling securely to the absorption of rag dolls and matchbox cradles and poppy-shell cooking pots. Vinya preferred playing in one of the girls' cottages, huddled in a corner of the huge pillowy bedstead, or on the earthen floor. Although no one actually said so, there was something in the reluctant evasive gestures of some of the villagers that told Vinya that her house, being Jewish, was considered a place of contam-

ination. Ah! how useful a role the sweets played for Vinya! Sometimes she shakily broke off a snitch of sugar and offered it to Nastya's five-year-old brother—brazen, taunting Petro—when indications of coming name calling warranted it.

With the gloom of autumn came a sharp chill, and the sky hung mistily over the village. The children sniffed the air knowingly, looked hopefully far away, then ran inside, waiting and watching through the small windows for the first flutter of snow.





4: The Home-coming

WHEN winter finally came, white and clear and frozen crisp, everything became livelier and more exciting. Vinya rushed out of the house every morning and coasted to the village school across the snow and ice, carrying her bundle of lunch. The coasting was what she liked, certainly not school. The very thought of school gave her a stomach ache. The pupils were mostly boys, from comparatively well-to-do families, as it was considered unnecessary and even a sign of pampering for girls to go to school. Boys were needed for work in the barns and the woodsheds till snowfall, so school started late in the season—thank good-

ness for that, thought Vinya! She was seven and a half years old, and the smallest in school. There were only a few girls near her age, and the rest were big husky boys. They had an important, assured air about them, because they knew that school was really for boys and that they were only to tolerate a few girls now and then. Vinya was always afraid of the bigger boys and their bold striding ways.

The schoolhouse was a strange stone building, different from any other in the village. There were immovable black desks inside. Inside was also a tall "citified" lady-teacher who walked around in an angry and often sly manner, one eye on the scared children, and the other on the whip in her hand.

The worst thing about the teacher and the school was the language. Everybody in the village (children and grown-ups) talked Ukrainian, but the teacher used only the official Russian. Even though the languages had a good deal in common, and Ukrainians could always understand Russian, it sounded so different and unnatural, and it was hard to talk in it, and to think of the right word. It was almost embarrassing to speak it and be afraid of making mistakes. All the books were in Russian.

"Ukrainian is mere peasant talk, not to be used in public. Russian is the only recognized language for our Russian Empire. The great tzar-emperor ordered it to be so," the teacher said again and again.

Vinya felt loose inside, when expecting the teacher to call on her. When called upon, she would become confused, wouldn't know the right answer, and would spend the rest of the school day crying. When she cried the teacher and the other children made fun of her. Then Vinya defended herself against derision—first she pretended indifference,

and then she resorted to forgetfulness. Indeed, once out of school, Vinya forgot her school troubles.

All their free time the children spent outdoors. They skated on homemade skates and coasted on the pond. They made snow tunnels and snow men, their oiled boots crunching on the ice. It was wonderful coming into the house from the cold! Then Mother's hot bean soup tasted delicious, and the crisp, brown onion-flavored chunks of goose fat were just as good, and a sweet, tingly, frozen apple made dessert.

There was a quiet regularity in the winter chores and the winter fun. The snow and frost did not melt from November till March, when icicles began to sparkle and to drip. Then the sun began to shine so they could really feel it, and a new, clean smell was in the air. At last came the thawing—first timid, and after a while swelling with force. The village was full of soft warm mud that was drying in patches. The village children all rushed to those dry patches, and felt the fresh earth, and played games on it. Everything was changing miraculously fast.

The wind puffed and blew, and the earth dried and grass peeped out. One breath of warmth and the willows turned soft and sprouted leaves. The green freshness grew, and the village children went out to seek treasures of wild flowers in the woods. Suddenly, the cherry blossoms came fluttering around every cottage. Spring was in full bloom now, and the lilac bushes were hung with myriads of flowers, heavenly scented.

One day there was unusual excitement and holiday preparations among the family, the cleaning and polishing of glass and brass, and the preparing and storing away of special foods. The reason for all the activity was a letter from Fanya saying that she would arrive in about a week.

She enclosed a photograph of herself. The photograph seemed astoundingly real to the children. Fanya's braids hung neatly behind her ears, her face was serious, fenced with a white round collar above her dark uniform. Vinya stared and stared at the photograph.

"Just like real," she repeated. Zelik peeked behind it, to make sure that there wasn't a person there. Mulik held the picture in front of him and started talking as if he were Fanya, making girlish gestures. When Father came in, he, too, smiled and stroked the picture, and remarked jovially, "Make ready for the home-coming of the eldest child—eh, Mother?"

The week went by like a whirl. Various delicacies were put away on shelves in the cool pantry. Mother uncovered a crock of raspberry jam, which she had been saving all winter, and now she would have it for the tea on the day of Fanya's arrival. She went to the cellar and brought a bowlful of pickled apples; they were the last of the winter supply. The fattened goose would do for a roast, it was decided. And in a day or two, the first scallions and radishes would be ready—just in time!

Very early in the morning, Father drove to the town of Repki to meet the big horse carriage arriving from Gomel. He was to get back early in the afternoon. Mulik and Vinya helped Mother with innumerable last-minute chores. They swept the house and all around it, and put bunches of lilacs in earthenware pitchers on the window sills. They tried to shoo Zelik out of the way, but he insisted on doing things.

"Well, then," ordered Vinya, "fetch another milk pitcher for flowers." But instead of taking an empty one from a fence post outside, he grabbed a full one from the kitchen. It was full of cream, at that, which Mother was

saving to make butter. The wooden lid rolled all over the floor, and the cream splattered into Zelik's face, and Zelik was promptly driven out of sight with a broomstick. When all was peaceful again, Zelik appeared grinning good-naturedly, saying with pretended casualness:

"I can see our horse up the road."

"Fanya is coming!" yelled Vinya, and she and Mulik ran wildly into the street. But to their consternation, they found no trace of sound of an approaching wagon. When they were about to give Zelik a piece of their mind, he had already vanished.

An hour later, when the samovar was humming in the kitchen corner, and Mother had just got through combing her hair and twisting it in a neat coil on the center of her head, they heard the approaching rattle of wagon wheels and the horse's stomping. Mother quickly spat the hairpins out of her mouth and tucked them all in place, without looking in the mirror. The children ran to greet the home-comers. They jumped into the wagon from behind and looked at Fanya with awe and joy. She responded with a wistful inclusive look and an intimate smile. The children started laughing and touched her bags. Vinya and Zelik took Fanya by the hand, and Mulik skipped backward in front.

"Are the cherries ripe yet?" Fanya asked.

"Oh, many of them are quite red!" exclaimed Vinya.

"I can pick a potful from the first tree!" promised Mulik.

"I'll get some for you," competed Zelik.

"Let me get them myself," suggested Fanya, protecting herself against the rushing hospitality of the younger children. Mother hugged Fanya and looked at her admiringly and asked her many questions that Fanya couldn't or wouldn't answer right away. She looked around the house

a little, then went into the garden. Everybody followed her, ready to attend to whatever wish she might have. Zelik ran up to her with a handful of cherries and Mulik with a bowlful. Fanya fingered them with pleasure and took a couple from each brother, then went over to the cherry tree herself.

"It's nice to be in the country and see trees full of ripe fruits!" she exclaimed, stretching her arms high. Vinya, too, felt joy and wonder from the big green tree speckled with shiny red cherries. Tomorrow she would climb to the very swinging top of it and pick a basket of cherries, so Mother would bake the tartlike *vareniki* with them. Suddenly a loud hissing sound came from the house—it was the samovar boiling over! Mother rushed in and took off the chimney pipe, and fixed the tea brew, and put glasses and raspberry jam and cakes on the table. The whole family gathered at the tea table, laughing, talking, praising the cakes and the jam. To Vinya, Fanya seemed like a fairy princess from the stories she'd heard Fanya herself tell. She was watched and admired and waited on by everybody, even by Father. How wonderful to have such a sister!

After an early supper, Fanya walked over by herself to the pond to hear the amusing concert of the frogs. She was always contented to be alone, or to go off by herself—watching, listening, musing, all her own way.

"What wonderful thoughts Fanya must have—if only she'd tell them to me," Vinya thought. She followed her older sister, she tried to get close to her to listen to anything she might have to say. And as Fanya listened dreamily to the frogs for a long time, Vinya, too, thought that the croaking and peeping of the frogs, with their special chorus effect, their repetition and odd rhythm, were fascinating. Hardly any words were spoken between the girls. When

they finally returned, dusk was descending, and on the other side of the village pond, young people began gathering for singing. Fanya and Vinya sat outside listening.

"I am glad to hear Ukrainian again," said Fanya. "I've been hearing only Russian." And she sang softly with the chorus as soon as it started, delighting in her native Ukrainian words.

"They are singing betrothal songs now, because Stepanida was engaged last night. Hear that?" said Vinya, as she heard Stepanida's name used in the song.

Soon Mother and Father and the boys came out and joined the girls on the big log, listening to the village chorus. From a soft hum of voices came a bold young tenor, opening the song. Then a male group developed the melody and everybody joined in the chorus part. After that a soprano sang a solo beginning, and the girls' group picked it up, and other variations were made. One song ended on a very high note, held by the strongest soprano, and another song ended with the lowest male bass voices in a delightful, low, expiring rumble. The harmony was beautiful, and the joined singing came from the heart—and went to the heart of listeners.

Most of the songs carried a sad mood, some hopelessly sad. Vinya knew that Mother felt the sad songs deeply. "It's true, it's true—the suffering and the tears," she said. "You can't understand it, children. Life is happy for you, and it should be. You'll see enough grief when you grow up."

When the singing stopped, Father carried the sleeping boys to their bed. Mother cleared her throat and asked hesitantly:

"Did you know, Fanya, that I am planning to go to Gomel for a month this summer?"

"Yes, Aunt told me, but I couldn't quite imagine *you* leaving home."

"Why, Mother!" exclaimed Vinya, perfectly shocked, though not actually grieved—she was too happy about Fanya's return to grieve about anything. "Who will do all the housework?"

"How about *you*, girls?" answered Father. "And me?"

"You, Father?" asked both girls at once.

"You—cooking?" asked Fanya.

"And even milking the cow?" asked Vinya. "I never saw a man do that!"

"I know how," reassured Father, "and Mother will enjoy a visit with her family."

"I haven't seen my brother and sisters for five years," Mother explained, and Vinya did not worry about her departure. She felt excited by the new housekeeping and was thinking already of welcoming Mother home.





5: Father Wears An Apron

MOTHER was gone that summer for three weeks. What unnatural weeks they seemed! In the morning there was no sound of Mother's perpetual pleasant hum of kitchen work, with smells and sounds that invited curious investigation from the children. There was no comfortable chattering and scolding, no exchange of confidences with an early neighbor visitor, no sudden burst of song. None of that from Father! Father simply authorized the children to eat some breakfast, without saying anything, and the girls placed cold food on the table. A few times Father ventured to make buckwheat cakes for breakfast, a huge steaming stack of dark buckwheat cakes with a big bowl of sour cream, ready to smother them. But how misshapen they

were! Some were so thick they were raw in the middle, and some so thin they curled up like paper; some were so huge, and others only the size of drops. The pancakes tasted peculiarly bitter, but Father ate them as if there was nothing wrong with them.

Father had to attend to his business as a merchant as well, so he didn't stay around the house much. Fanya and Vinya cleaned and prepared some food by themselves, but Father attended to all the real cooking. It was amusing to the children to see Father bending low over a pot, cutting up onions into the meat. Quantities of onions! He had onions in everything, boiled and fried and raw. Fanya liked only a flavoring of onion, Zelik liked the first bite of it, and the other children didn't care for them at all. Yet, Father kept right on using them. He loved onions. He adored pepper, too. He covered the meat with it completely, and all vegetables were thoroughly sprinkled with black pepper so you couldn't tell the color, but he would put still more pepper on his own plate. At mealtimes he drank his little glass of vodka, pushed up his mustache from his mouth, and looked approvingly on his nice peppery meal. All the food was, of course, thoroughly salted. Soft, stewed beef, which they expected to taste just right, was simply saturated with salt. Vinya and Mulik merely ate their portions and exchanged glances—they didn't dare leave anything on the plate. Zelik went on chewing as if he didn't know the difference. Fanya talked politely with Father, taking tiny bites of her meat now and then. Father invariably asked the children to bring the sour dill pickles, and he urged everyone to have a pickle. He liked them so well that he ate a whole one plain, in two bites. Nobody else cared for them that much.

Every afternoon Father was gone, attending to his cattle buying, grain selling, orchard renting business, but always

he came home in time to milk the black-and-white cow. The three younger children hid behind the barn door so they could watch, with giggling curiosity. Fanya was more thoughtful. "Why shouldn't a man milk a cow! The work of milking is hard enough even for a man. I tried it!" she said.

"Yes, but who always milks the cow in every household in the village?" asked Mulik, and answered his own question. "The women and the girls, of course!"

"Wouldn't it be funny," Vinya speculated, "if men tried to spin and wash clothes in the creek?"

"Well, they could if they had to," replied Fanya. "And they wouldn't fall into the water, either."

"Then would women do men's work?" asked Mulik, laughing at such a preposterous idea.

"Well? Perhaps they could," answered Fanya.

"Here comes Father!" yelled Zelik, and the children felt foolish to be thus spying on him. Fanya walked into the house with her book. Zelik had discovered his missing hoop, and rolled it away into the dusty street. Vinya and Mulik stayed on, however, watching Father's masculine figure settling on the small woman's stool that Mother always used. They watched him go through all the gestures of washing and drying the cow's udders, of adjusting the wooden bucket, and of getting it full and foamy to the top. All those things seemed perfectly natural and proper for Mother to do, but for Father to be bending and crouching there, practically under the cow, and carrying a bucket and a towel—it seemed strange and even indecent.

"Oh, when will Mother be back?" moaned Vinya, after Father had carried the milk into the house.

"Don't you think Father feels a little ashamed to be doing woman's work?" wondered Mulik.

"He doesn't seem to," replied Vinya. "He is even making cheese in the cheese bags."

When they came into the house, there was something still stranger going on. Father had opened the dough barrel and was starting the making of bread! The children were simply awe-struck! Would Father do that much woman's work? They saw him reach with his hand into the salt bag. They remembered the stewed beef, and surmised that the bread would be good and salty. Fanya looked on admiringly and didn't seem shocked. Seeing the children's wide-eyed astonishment, Father explained a little:

"You see, a person should know how to do every kind of useful work. Just watch, and learn, and *do* it when you have to." Then he added cheerfully, "It will be good bread, children."

"But isn't Mother coming home soon?" remarked Vinya. "She could make the bread then, and we could borrow some from the neighbors in the meantime, as we did the other week."

"But why borrow if I can bake it? It will be good bread," persisted Father. "Fresh bread for Mother tomorrow!"

"When?" asked Vinya and Mulik and Zelik at once. They caught the last two words, "Mother tomorrow," and began jumping and squealing irrepressibly.

"Is it really true?" asked Fanya, and Father nodded.

That evening the children ate gleefully their supper of Father-made cheese with plenty of salt in it, and sour cream, spoiled with pepper. All were so happy that they couldn't stop singing.

Vinya awoke extra-early the following morning, but Fanya was already up, walking through the garden by herself, as usual, inspecting what had happened there overnight. Vinya was puzzled. Although she, too, enjoyed

seeing flowers and plants, she couldn't understand why Fanya lingered for hours alone in the garden, and what she saw beneath its surface. Yet, she asked no questions, only watched her sister and tried to read her mind. She joined Fanya eagerly in the garden now, and they picked some fuzzy, green, baby cucumbers for breakfast.

"Did you see Father knead the dough?" Fanya asked.

"No, I came out through the window," Vinya answered. "He must look funny. Does he have an apron on, too?"

Both girls laughed as they came into the house through the dark vestibule. Father had not only an apron, but a whole tablecloth over him, up to his chin. His big mustache peering over the tablecloth looked ridiculous. His earnest expression, as he dug his bare arms into the round tub, puffing with the heaving dough, made the children want to laugh all the more. The boys stood by with their unwashed faces and mussed hair, gaping at the strange performance. Father made motions to Vinya to bring him some more flour and then some more water, and she did it quickly, the same as she did for Mother when she was kneading the dough.

"Could I help?" Fanya offered. To her surprise, Father pulled his hands out of the dough and told her she could finish kneading! Quickly Fanya harnessed herself into an apron, tied a white kerchief over her head, scrubbed and scraped her hands clean, and proudly went to work on the already soft and yielding dough. Vinya stood by admiring the well-developed, strong, twelve-year-old Fanya.

"The lucky one," murmured Vinya. "But maybe Mother will let me knead—if it's a smaller tub, she might."

Father scraped and brushed himself off, cleaned his floured mustache, and stroked it into place. Then he attended to his own breakfast of salty herring and salted cu-

cumbers. He gave Fanya some instructions, promised to be back in time to bake the bread, blew his nose loudly, and departed for the morning. The boys told him they'd have plenty of wood brought in for the oven.

With special house cleaning and excitement about Mother's arrival, the time flew by, and Father was back and in his ridiculous tablecloth apron again. He shaped the loaves clumsily, compared to the way Mother did it, and shoved them into the red-hot oven, on the big shovel.

"Will the bread come out right?" wondered Vinya. "Father must have made some mistake . . . that's right, he didn't mop up the oven with a sizzling wet cloth, the way Mother did. Now what will happen?" Mulik noticed Vinya's worried look.

"What if Mother came in now?" he asked.

"Mother should be very pleased," remarked Fanya.

Father was taking special care in shaping the loaves, and Vinya suddenly realized how extra-considerate Father was, to do all this unaccustomed work to help and please Mother, as well as to provide for the whole family. There seemed nothing comical in the sight of a man doing woman's work any more; instead, there was something heroic in it. "Fanya knew how good it was of Father to do it," thought Vinya. "Fanya knows everything." Vinya looked in silence at her older sister.

When the tin door was latched on the brick oven, full of round, peaked loaves, the children waited anxiously for the coming smell. When it came, the boys' nostrils twitched, and Vinya tiptoed out to call Father—it wouldn't do to run and slam doors when bread is in the oven! Fanya took a contented whiff of the smell, smiled knowingly, and continued reading her novel. The smell was getting more and more convincing. It was unmistakably good, fresh dark

rye bread in the oven, there. Father was right. And how he beamed, taking the loaves out of the oven! He blew quickly on his fingers as he picked up the hot loaves from the hearth and took them to the table. Suddenly, the door squeaked open, and there appeared as if from out of nowhere, as if by magic—Mother. There she stood in the doorway with a huge basket and bundle!

“Mamochka!” cried Vinya. Zelik jumped on her neck and Mulik started dancing, holding on to Mother’s shawl.

“Aha! You weren’t expecting me,” laughed Mother, placing the bundles on the bench.

“How did you come?” asked Fanya, putting her book out of sight.

“Go on, tell us,” urged Father smiling broadly at Mother.

“Well, the carriage from Gomel was drawn by good horses,” Mother explained, as everyone crowded around her to listen, “and we came to Repki hours earlier than I expected.”

“But how could you get here from Repki?” asked Mulik, in a mystified voice. “Father didn’t even *start out* to go to Repki for you.”

“I just found a ride, son,” answered Mother. “I went to the Repki market and found a horse, a wagon, and a driver going my way. It was our neighbor Mikola.”

Father had to finish taking the bread out of the oven, and he seemed somewhat abashed. And Mother was not a little astonished at the sight of fresh bread. Then, everyone except Father himself fell to praising Father’s good housework, mentioning everything he did. There was no feeling of impropriety in the children’s voices, in spite of what they had felt at first.

Mother had gifts for everybody in her bundles—bright rubber balls, and imported chocolate candy in beautiful,

shiny wrappers, and a box of Turkish tobacco for Father, and some fine material for a new dress for Fanya. Fanya held the material against her, before a small mirror, looking at it long and carefully, and she seemed pleased. Vinya looked on rather sadly. She knew that now she would automatically inherit Fanya's faded dress; a thick hem would be made on the bottom of the old dress, but nothing would be done for the drooping shoulders, and she would feel conspicuous wearing it on a visit to Repki. But Vinya said nothing and soon forgot about it, happy with the ball and the chocolate and comforted by Mother's return.

For tea, Mother took out of the basket a container of such thick, purple plum jelly that it could be cut, and delicious, tiny, little white cookies, which her sister had made and sent on for the family. What delicacy!

With the commotion of Mother's home-coming, and the endless exchange of news, bedtime was late that evening. The nightingales sang especially clearly and persistently. Fanya sat outside, listening, enchanted, and Vinya joined her. Mother and Father were talking animatedly about Mother's trip and Father's business, and of course, the children. There was a fresh concern in their voices, and Vinya came in to listen, absorbing their concern.

"No, they shouldn't wait another year," reiterated Father. "The boys need discipline and schooling now. Otherwise they'll become idlers."

"God forbid," agreed Mother. "We should engage at once that teacher in Repki, and have the boys join his class in the early fall. The small tuition is worth it."

"That has to be," asserted Father. "They couldn't go to the village school where they'd be the only Jewish boys, and the youngest ones at that."

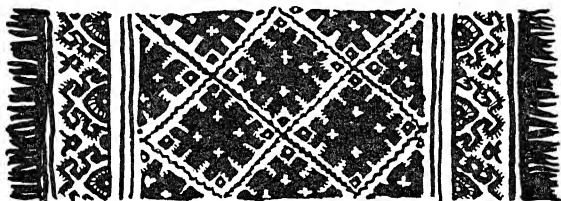
"I know," agreed Mother. "They'd be called Christ-killers and be intimidated."

Vinya couldn't understand the meaning of that hateful phrase, but she felt the implied oppression. She knew that the daily visits of the priest in school frightened her, and that his sprinkling of holy water on the bowed, kneeling children and his ominous-sounding prayer made chills run down her back. What if the omniscient Jewish God should discover her kneeling before a priest, discover her subservience to hostile Christianity? Wouldn't He be hostile to her then? Vinya put the horrible thought hastily out of her mind, and listened. Mother was talking:

"I hope Mother will be well enough to take care of them. Zelik is only six and a half."

"We will bring her provisions regularly," offered Father, "and the boys will be coming for vacations." As usual, Mother agreed with Father, then noticing Vinya, but not knowing that she was listening, Mother urged her to go to bed.

As the three younger children slept together, Vinya managed to waken Mulik and confide to him the news about the next members of the family to leave home.





6:

Life in Town

THE private Jewish school in the town of Repki consisted of a darkish, crowded room, where little boys sat at a large table reciting in a singsong fashion all day long. Zelik hated it and tried to butt his way out every morning. But Babushka was kind and patient.

Babushka was a fair-complexioned, soft-voiced, plumpish woman, with wavy light brown hair wound on the top of

her head. She wore a fresh apron tied around her waist, and always produced sweets from various hiding places to surprise her grandchildren. Her favorite grandchild was Fanya, but she was very indulgent with the others, too, including Zelik. She had her own way of disciplining and she never complained to the family about Zelik. When Father or Mother came to call, Zelik usually would not be in, and Babushka would flutter around, flap her hands on her apron, and order Diedushka to go find him. Diedushka had a sharp, very active nose and a curly, agitated beard. He was very hot-tempered and contrary, but always ended by obeying Babushka in everything. So when ordered to look for Zelik, he would bark in reply, "Go yourself! Go yourself!"

"Are you being impudent to me?" Babushka would ask slowly, with a regal look. And Diedushka would throw up his hands in righteous despair, and slam the door! And that's the way they lived together. The reason for it was that Diedushka was Babushka's second husband, and he was never regarded as a real relative worthy of concern by either Babushka or any of her family. Diedushka was not without virtues, however, the outstanding one being his uncanny faculty for finding things every day. The greatest variety of objects imaginable was piled under the cot and in the corners of his closet-like room—carved stones, rusty jewelry, silver spoons, frames, ladies' handkerchiefs, toys of all sorts. Sometimes he came home with an injured bird, or with a stray cat or dog. Mulik and Zelik were fascinated by the collections and often either added to or subtracted from them. Babushka always questioned the source with legal intonation.

Diedushka could find not only objects, but persons in various stages of being missed. Whether a person had just this minute left for somewhere, or whether he hadn't been

seen for quite a while, or whether he disappeared long ago, Diedushka would invariably find that person. He was often requisitioned for just such detective service in the town—of course, after due consultation with Babushka, and after subduing her protests. There was, therefore, no need for anyone to worry about little six-year-old Zelik's whereabouts, as long as Diedushka was available. And sure enough, Zelik would be found, with his clothes in expected state of disorder, grinning-happy, surprised at being wanted.

Zelik's unhappiness with school continued.

"I don't understand the teacher. He shrieks too much," he complained.

"But he teaches you, too," argued Babushka.

"No, he scolds and scolds all the time. And he slaps too hard," Zelik whined, rubbing his cheek protectively. But Babushka urged him and hugged him and promised a special cookie after school. Zelik would finally go. He tried very hard to sneak a little fun in school. He moved his feet, exploring in all directions under the table, and he poked here and there with his hands behind his back; he glanced around, his eyes roving across the teacher's shoulders. But luck was seldom with him. The heavy old books, the dull meaning in them, and the monotony of the endless recitations harassed the boy. He often escaped in the middle of the day and ran home to Babushka. Babushka patted him and gave him sweets, and thus persuaded him to go back to school.

Mulik, on the other hand, took to learning and memorizing and reciting like no one else. The other children were amazed and awed, and this made Mulik feel he had power over them even if his fists were weak. The bookish teacher grinned with satisfaction and called on Mulik only to show him off and not to find fault with him, as he did with the

other children. When Mulik didn't have to be afraid of the teacher because he knew all his lessons, he began thinking up things of his own. He became interested in saying words backward, and practiced it so much, challenging children and grownups with it, that he soon became a famous town performer at the age of seven and a half. No matter how unusual or how long a word would be given him, Mulik would reply, unhesitating, with the correct backward form. Words like Constantinople couldn't stump him, and neither could long Russian middle names, such as Yakovlevich, which was Father's middle name. He could even say whole sentences backward. Soon every child in town was practicing backward talk, but none could compete with Mulik. He was the champion.

"You should hear him," people would say. "He is simply hilarious."

Later, Mulik thought up other language tricks, quiz questions, and innumerable jokes. Groups of children and grownups gathered for Mulik's language entertainment. He could read Hebrew, he told stories in modern Jewish, and he conversed freely in Ukrainian. Zelik, too, became interested in tricks and performances, though usually he only copied Mulik.

"They are such clever boys," said Babushka, smiling as she watched their shows. She was also patient with the boys' collections of matchboxes and picture candy wrappers and Mulik's special birds' eggs collection. In fact, Babushka indulged the boys. She not only prepared special treats for them, but allowed them to stuff their pockets as well! She let them play without reminding them of homework. When anything was wrong with Zelik's schoolwork, as often it was, Babushka blamed the teacher, and stood firm in defense of Zelik when Father asked any questions.

In spite of the many hours a day the boys had to sit on the school bench, with Zelik being scolded and whacked, they both felt attached to Repki. It was their second home. Once in a while they saw an automobile going magically by itself. How they stared at that automobile, dreaming that someday they might get near it and touch it! There was also a completely mysterious telegraph in Repki, and a very businesslike, forbidding post office. From Repki many grownups traveled to the state capital, the city of Chernigov, but very few children in Repki had ever been to Chernigov—twenty miles away.

In their own village, Svinopuhi, there was no church at all. People went to church on Sundays to the next village, Buyanki, three miles away. But in Repki there was a beautiful round-roofed church with a tremendous, loud bell. When the bell chimed rhythmically, it was wonderful to listen to it and to make up different phrases, and pictures to go with the phrases. Some phrases and pictures were serious, almost frightening, like "God-in-Heaven, God-in-Heaven," with a huge God actually revealing Himself in the clouds. Then sometimes it was possible to make up silly phrases, like "Wake-up-Masha, wake-up-Masha; call-Natasha, call-Natasha."

Inside the church a glorious choir sang beautiful and haunting church music. When Vinya visited in Repki, she and Mulik tiptoed breathlessly inside the church, and listened to the wonderful singing.

In Repki there was also a big synagogue, for there were many Jewish families there. On holidays and Saturdays, the synagogue was full of sad, monotonous singing. Sometimes the singing turned to wailing and crying, which was all a proper part of praying. On holidays it was especially crowded and festive in the synagogue. The women sat

completely separated from the men, dressed in laces and jewels, and crying into their prayer books. Little boys, too, filled the synagogue with singing prayers. Mulik was well versed in all the intricacies of the Jewish rituals and religious learning, which were in the ancient Hebrew language.

The boys became so accustomed to living in town with Babushka that they didn't seem to miss home. But when Father drove and took them home, their excitement and anxiety knew no bounds. How good it was to hear Mother working and singing in the house! Home was especially wonderful and happy to the children when the older sister was there.

Although Fanya made excellent marks in all her studies, because Father couldn't pay her tuition that year, she had to quit school and come home. The younger children were too glad to have Fanya home to ask questions. Fanya, too, responded to the warmth and imagination of the younger children and frequently joined them in play.

With Vinya's absorption in reading fairy tales and Mulik's love for making shows, all four children took to dramatizing favorite folk tales at home. The younger children were willing to have Fanya take any part, and listened reverently to suggestions she made for the wording or the acting.

Sometimes the children had special games in the hayloft, and the younger ones begged Fanya to join, and when she did, their happiness was beyond words. When they were indoors and Fanya persisted in reading to herself, the younger children gave her no peace till she consented to draw them one picture each. Her easy lines and clear simple pictures were as pleasing to the children as book illustrations. But the most wonderful thing of all was when Fanya told them a story without any persuasion. Ah, what a treat

it was to have Fanya home! Mother, too, treated her with special respect and expected practically no help from her in housework. The whole family admired Fanya's quietness—she spoke so little—and what she said seemed very wise and to the point. And when Fanya played the guitar and sang harmoniously to its accompaniment, Mulik and Vinya invariably came and sat by her and sang with her.

Zelik was too busy cutting out horses. It was his latest pursuit. Zelik became so fascinated with drawing horses and then cutting them out that he had no time even to get into mischief. At first the family thought that perhaps they had an artistic child, but they soon changed their minds. Zelik kept doing exclusively one thing over and over again, till it drove everybody mad—horses, horses, and many more horses.

"Won't you ever try to draw something else?" Vinya asked. But Zelik paid no attention. He walked around in the house with his tongue stuffed in one cheek, his chin moving with the rhythm of the scissors, his eyes squinting and crossing, leaving paper droppings everywhere. Mother was desperate, but she consoled herself that at least there was nothing dangerous in this as there was in the smoking not long ago. Still, the rest of the family wished that Zelik would take up something else besides the drawing and cutting of horses. It would probably be some form of pestering, for pestering was as much expected of Zelik as funny antics were of Mulik, or Fanya's perpetual reading, or Mother's work and singing. To Vinya, everyone at home meant something special, and she herself was in the middle and in the midst of everything, feeling the wholeness of the home. But the home didn't stay whole. Shaking things were happening in the entire country, and in the invisible big world. It was the beginning of the First World War.



7: Father Goes Away

THERE were very few males voices in the village singing now, for the young had all gone to war. The women did the plowing and the sowing and even the threshing. Customs were abandoned for necessities.

One evening Vinya heard pug-nosed Marya's voice across the fence and stopped to listen.

"Yes, my little cow," said Marya confidently, as if she

were speaking to a person. "Since my man's been away I have to do the plowing, and that's why I am so tired. So tired, my little cow, I can hardly milk you." Then Marya went on to discuss all her affairs with the cow, in the way she had done with her husband before he went to war.

How the village women cried and longed for letters! But, of course, very few letters came to the village because most of the village soldiers did not know how to write, and the rest could write only with difficulty. When a woman got a letter, she'd know it was dictated and couldn't always believe it. Not a single woman in the village, except Mother, could read or write, so the few reading children helped with the soldiers' correspondence. Having gone to school two years, Vinya could read and write, and soldiers' wives forever beseeched her to write letters for them, and even offered her gifts for it. Mother could read better than she could write, and she was always being asked to read letters. The letters were so hard to decipher that poor Mother sweated with effort, and the poor anxious women bit their lips, waiting and guessing. Father could write best of all, and every evening a crowd of women waited at the house to have a letter written. Father composed the letters himself, after the women explained to him elaborately, and often tearfully, what they wanted to say. They offered him all sorts of pay. But he always said very definitely, "I'll take nothing."

Soon men with children began to be mobilized, and it looked as if Father would have to go, too. The children couldn't understand just what was happening, except that the Germans had to be fought and that there was a great deal of shooting somewhere. They wished Fanya were home to explain things to them, but she had gone to school again. They guessed from Father's and Mother's whispering

talk that something unusually serious was going to happen in the family. It was a greater burden than paying for Fanya's school, or the need for winter coats, which Mother was to sew for the boys. A family separation was brewing again. Finally, the children learned definitely that Father would have to leave home, not for active soldier duty, but for some forestry work near Gomel. Now Mother would have to do Father's work as well as her own. Father didn't say much; he only advised Mother what to do, and kept telling her not to worry, for he expected to be back in a few months on leave. Mother wrote down Father's instructions with great care and pains, but she wasn't used to writing.

“You do it,” she said to Father, but he smiled and shook his head. He wanted her to practice writing.

"Well . . ." Mother hesitated, "Vinya is going to be at home with me. She'll help write letters—she is good at writing." Vinya heard this remark with rising pride. She had always wanted to be useful to the family and to be recognized for her usefulness, and here it came. Doing things would be a way to make up for the sadness of having Father away.

"I'll do it, Mama, I'll do it, I promise," she exclaimed. "I wrote a letter to Nadezhda's husband the other day when she asked me to, and she gave me some berries for it. I wrote letters for other women, too."

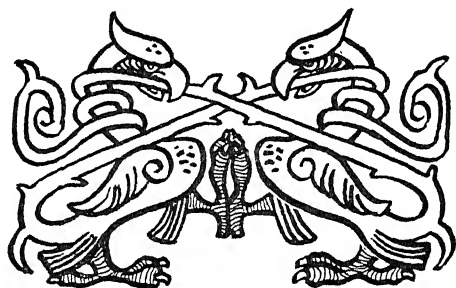
"I know," said Mother.

"That's good, daughter!" praised Father and patted Vinya on the head.

When Father had left and the boys, too, had gone away to their school, Mother did not try to hide anything from Vinya. Together they felt the grief and confusion. Mother worked tirelessly all day, attending to the store, having

business talks with peasants and merchants, and spinning and sewing and knitting. In the evening after she had written a letter to Father, she would often moan and weep, but say nothing. An illness of some sort troubled Mother, and she complained about it to her women friends who frequented the house. But Vinya couldn't understand it; it was mysterious woman's talk, beyond a nine-year-old girl.

"If only this loneliness at home were over," Vinya thought one night. "If only everyone would come back, then it would be safe and warm." And curling up for the night, she pulled the covers over her head.





8: The Family is Bigger

ONE winter was especially heavy and fierce. The snowfall came earlier than usual, before November, obscuring the cottages, erecting perilous banks. By December, the frost had a sword edge to it. It pierced a person clean through, calling for a tough comeback. Eyelashes and nostrils became frosted, and it felt as if one's very breath would freeze if he stayed outdoors a bit longer. The wind growled and groaned like a hungry beast and the sky looked dense.

"A big snowstorm is coming," the peasants prophesied. "Big and mighty!"

Mulik and Zelik had been home from school for a week;

and together with Vinya they spent most of the time playing card games or drawing or reading on the top of the big brick oven. They were in high spirits now because Fanya and Father were both coming home for Christmas vacation. Zelik slid and jumped from the oven top and pressed his warm face against the frost-coated window. But although he breathed hard and even scraped with his nails, he managed to clear only a tiny peephole for a view. All he could see through it was snow, shaded with grayish light. Tired of quiet, Mulik, too, jumped down and exercised his limbs with the twirling, leaping *hopak* dance.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Vinya, watching from the "balcony" of the oven top, and clapping her hands. "Do it again!"

Mulik made some preparatory rhythmic movements, then spun like a top, and leaped powerfully into the air some four feet off the ground; then he bounced, and stood still and proud.

"I've practiced on this leap," he explained.

Cautiously, sliding and stepping on a bench, Vinya climbed down from the oven and stretched and yawned, inhaling the cool air, which came in even through the storm windows.

"Mamochka, when will they be here?" she asked.

"Any time now," Mother replied, sitting down wearily after filling a crock with fresh poppy-seed cakes. Vinya noticed that Mother had been looking quite weary and rather clumsy lately, although she was only thirty years old. But, of course, she couldn't ask Mother any questions about it—a grownup wouldn't answer a child's serious question! A grownup has no idea of what a child thinks, and there is nothing one can do about it. Vinya often felt that it was tiresome being a child and not knowing things that

she wanted badly to know. There were many things about Mother that were mysterious and unanswerable.

"Ooh!" shouted Zelik. "I hear something crunching outside! I do!" The other children looked skeptically at him, but nonetheless, they quieted for attention. Soon they discerned hoofbeats, gate squeaks, sled crunches, and finally, muffled human voices. Everyone rushed for coats and shawls.

"Poor Father!" wailed Mother. "He drove in a sled all the way from Gomel, where he got the horse and picked up Fanya. How cold they must be now, the poor things!" There was boot-stomping and groping for the doorknob in the dark vestibule, and then Fanya pushed through the door. She was bundled from head to foot, with a borrowed fur coat over her arm, besides the one she wore. A thick shawl was wound round her head and neck. She was panting and trying to rub her numb fingers, and grimacing from the cold. Everyone fell to helping her pull off all the heavy, clumsy wrappings, pulling off her boots, and rubbing her this way and that.

"Poor Father has to unharness the new horse yet," said Fanya, after catching up with the indoor air.

"I'd better help him and bring some wood in, too," said Mother, and wrapping a huge woolen shawl around herself, she went out-of-doors. The children plied Fanya with questions. Zelik wanted to know if the new horse was frisky, Mulik wanted to know what Gomel looked like, and Vinya wanted to know how long Fanya and Father were going to stay home. Soon Father came in, his boots squeaking from the snow on them, his dark mustache white with frost. He kissed all the children roughly, and then unbelted and unbuckled his long, thick fur coat with the big beaver collar, and stretched and pulled himself out of it. After that he

blew his nose very loud, making that familiar bugle sound that meant to Vinya, "Father's home—now all's well."

Again the family was all together, after months of separation. Everything seemed festive in the house. The spotless stiff white tablecloth, decorated with Mother's embroidery, the smell of the stuffed roast goose, the freshly polished samovar purring in the corner by the stove, the raspberry jam. Yet there was an uneasiness in the house, as if all these good things were too good to last. Although there was singing after supper as usual, Mother sighed between verses, and Father lagged, and Mulik took up the lead of the family chorus.

Before going to bed, Father made sure that there was a sufficient pile of wood near both stoves, and that the fires shouldn't go out during the night. Vinya and the boys settled on the oven for the night, Fanya slept on a cot below them, and Mother and Father in the adjoining room. While everyone was going to sleep, the wind whistled shrilly through the chimney, and more snow fell and drifted and banked up all around the house. Vinya lay awake listening to the brewing and blowing of the snow-storm, and continued hearing it in her sleep.

When she awoke a few hours later, she still heard it. But it wasn't the storm sound that awakened her—she was used to the snowstorm. This was an unusual and disturbing sound. She heard it quite distinctly, although now that she was fully awake and listening for it, there was complete silence in the house. The sound was human, yet impossible to describe. Perhaps it was an animal. No, the horse and the cow were too big, and they had no sheep, so there could be no animal in the house protected from the frost. Perhaps, Vinya decided, she had only dreamed of that sound because of hearing the storm. Comforted with this thought she

tried to go off to sleep, when suddenly it came again. It was a deep strong moan. Someone was in pain, unmistakably.

Who? Who could it be? Vinya quickly felt for her brothers in the dark near her, and knew that they were sleeping safely. Mulik was curled up like a caterpillar, and Zelik was stretched out, emitting a little snoring sound. She was annoyed at their insensitive sleeping during such a troubled moment. She leaned over and tried to peer through the darkness at Fanya's cot, and she succeeded in recognizing Fanya's shape there. Fanya, too, seemed not disturbed, not turning in her bed. Who was it, then? *What* was it? Vinya felt like crying, but suppressed it by holding her hands tight to her eyes and mouth. She lay motionless for a minute, staring wide-eyed into the complete blind darkness. Although she dreaded it, she was waiting for the sound to come again, so that she could try once more to recognize it. Again she began thinking that the sound might have been her imagination, or some mistake. That's it, a mistake! But the comfort she felt from this thought was suddenly broken by another mystifying moan and cry. Vinya straightened and stiffened with fear. It sounded like a person in some agony; her imagination ran wild, her head pounded. Was it Father? Did he have the typhus from which so many people were dying? No, no, that was a woman's voice, high pitched. Could it be Mother? But she was perfectly well at bedtime, only a little weary. Mother was never really sick—never!

She wished she could open the door to the adjoining room and see. But she didn't dare.

At this moment, she heard Fanya turn over on the cot.

"Fanya! What is happening? Who is moaning?" Vinya gasped. "Can you hear?"

"I heard. I'll tell you later," Fanya whispered back, and Vinya flung herself on the pillow and sobbed. The door opened, and Father tiptoed around the brick oven and toward the stove. He was filling a kettle of water from the full buckets on the bench.

"Father, Father," she whispered, "is it Mother who is sick? Tell me!"

"Yes," he answered in a whisper, "but she'll be all right soon—don't worry. She'll be over it by morning. Go to sleep now, and don't wake the boys."

"But, Father . . ." Vinya began.

She was stopped by Father's terse reprimand. "Be quiet now, and go to sleep, daughter." Vinya thought, "Now, what could be the trouble with Mother? And how does Father know she'll be all right in the morning?" Yet he sounded so sure about it. Everything became quiet again, and Vinya dozed off.

When she woke up, daylight was creeping in. The boys were awake and whispering. Father came in and told the boys to get dressed quickly. He would take them to the neighbor's he said, as there had to be quiet in the house on account of Mother's illness. In spite of their unwillingness to leave, both Mulik and Zelik promptly did as they were told. The snow was very deep outside and Father wrapped Zelik in a blanket and carried him in his arms, while Mulik trudged in the snow by his side. When Father and the boys were out of the house, Fanya asked Vinya to come to her.

"You know what it is?" she confided. "Mother is giving birth to a baby now, and that is why she is groaning."

"Oh," gasped Vinya, "I didn't know she was expecting to—she didn't look so big to me—not big like the other women in the village who are expecting babies. Not at all

like them . . . so that is why she was so weary and clumsy! Now I understand! Oh, how long will it take, Fanya?"

"A few hours, I think," answered Fanya. "The midwife is coming over to take care of Mother, and then Father will drive down to Repki to bring a doctor, too." Fanya seemed calm, but Vinya cried, smothering her sobs. It was all so sudden, so mysterious and strangely sad.

"Why is there pain when a baby is born?" she asked Fanya. "When Zelik was born—it was quick and easy. I didn't hear any moans."

"There isn't always pain," Fanya answered consolingly. Then the door opened, and with a stomping of boots and a clapping of mittened hands, in came the village midwife. She untied the huge shawl from around her head and sat down with a sigh. The girls greeted the old woman, scrutinizing her deep-wrinkled face, her keen eyes, her nimble fingers. Besides being a midwife, old Vasiliha was also a well-known *sheptuha*. She could whisper healing incantations, accompanied by certain "beneficent" gestures; she was the most trusted village sorceress. People called Vasiliha for every kind of sickness, and although the sick ones often did not get cured, and many died under her ministrations, Vasiliha was still sought whenever sickness came.

Fanya looked at Vasiliha thoughtfully, and asked if she could help her carry anything to Mother. The old woman shook her head and tightened her lips over her gums. Vanya watched her reverently, remembering how old Vasiliha had been called one time when she and the boys were sick, and had placed her powerful hand on their bare stomachs and whispered strange, fascinating words. The strange words and the prescribed rubbing had caused the Evil Eye to vanish. Old Vasiliha understood the mys-

teries of illness and pain and she would surely help Mother, Vinya thought, sighing.

Soon Father came in, and, after taking off his completely snow-covered coat and hat, led Vasiliha to Mother. The girls stood in the open doorway. Mother waved to them, and smiling weakly, told them not to worry—she'd soon have a new baby for them.

"Weren't you saying that you wanted a baby to care for?" she reminded Vinya. Vinya nodded uncertainly. Then both girls had to leave Mother.

The snow was still falling outside, the wind howling, and the roads impassable. But Father, nevertheless, left the midwife in charge of Mother, and fitted himself into the fur coat and felt snow boots, harnessed the new horse to the high sleigh, and drove to Repki for the doctor.

"The doctor will be best," he told Fanya, confidentially. Fanya looked at him understandingly and later passed the knowledge on to the waiting, wondering Vinya. Father's and Fanya's regard for the doctor made Vinya at once lose confidence in the midwife. "The doctor *studies* and certainly *knows* more than a sheptuha, a whispering sorceress." Vinya repeated in her mind Fanya's words.

When more sounds came from Mother behind the closed doors, Fanya and Vinya pretended not to mind. Fanya was trying to read, Vinya was trying to embroider, but Fanya never turned a page, and Vinya only smeared the cloth and pricked her fingers hard. Suddenly there was a new sound behind the door—a never heard, new sound, the high crying sound of a newborn baby! The girls held their breath, with mouths open. "Now all the trouble will be over," both of them thought. "The baby's come, and all's well!"

But everything did not seem to be over. There was mysterious silence, and the midwife's rushing and shuffling

around and clattering with various receptacles, and again whispering. Vinya wished that old Vasiliha would stop all the magic and tell them something understandable, in human language, and straight to the face. Finally the old woman opened the door quietly and told the girls to take a look at the baby. Fanya tiptoed over to the basket with the moist, tiny, dark-haired infant. Vinya first looked at Mother, who was half-asleep, sweating and exhausted. Then she looked at the baby.

"Oh," she whispered, nudging Fanya, "how *tiny*! Is it supposed to be so tiny?" Fanya shrugged her shoulders, then nodded. Vinya wanted to know whether Mother was all well again, but the midwife seemed very busy and very cross, so she didn't dare ask her. And then the girls were told to leave.

Hours later, when the girls were still puzzled and anxious about Mother, Father came home with the doctor. Before Father had a chance to remove his snow-covered wraps, Fanya told him about the new baby. Father's tense face became at once relieved and relaxed.

The doctor scrubbed his rosy-looking hands meticulously, making a great deal of lather with the soap, polished his spectacles, picked up his important-looking black bag, and went into Mother's room. Vinya fairly jumped for joy. The doctor, who had the great power of knowledge, would surely fix everything. How good that he came, she thought—*now* Mother will be all right! Fanya smiled lightheartedly, and Father winked at the girls.

"So you have a baby sister now," he said, and went into Mother's room.

Fanya and Vinya were still mystified, however, realizing and guessing that something was still happening to Mother, although the baby was already born. Suddenly, there was

a shriek from Mother, and in a moment again the small, gaspy sound of a tiny baby. Fanya and Vinya looked at each other questioningly. "Could it be another baby, perhaps . . ." they wondered, and worried. Soon the door opened, and Father walked out with an astounding announcement—"You now have *two* baby sisters!"

The girls were allowed to see the two tiny, wrapped-up, dark-haired, squirmy babies in one small basket. They looked at the babies with intense curiosity, but Vinya couldn't help thinking of Mother lying there, all spent, motioning to Father for a drink of water. Father was bending over her with such sad tenderness and protection as she had never seen in him. A new understanding of the feeling between Father and Mother came to Vinya.

Everyone left the now dark room where Mother and the babies were sleeping. By the dim kerosene lamplight, the midwife, who had become a mere chore woman in Vinya's eyes, was tearing up an old sheet into diapers, and rolls with which to bind the infants, the way all peasants did. The doctor was washing his hands meticulously again and talking with Father about Mother's diet. Ah, there was magnificence in the doctor's stature and gestures and learned language! There was an air of things being finished and settled now. But, at the same time, a sense of a new burden was felt.

The boys were delighted with the arrival of the twins. It was like a holiday present for them.

"They are both alike! Isn't it funny!" Mulik exclaimed. "And don't they act like baby pigs!" he added, pointing his fingers at the infants, who were both sucking, cuddled in Mother's arms. Zelik pasted his horse pictures along the walls, then walked on his hands, and neighed to amuse the twins. But the twins only yelled impatiently, and then

sucked hard, burrowing with their faces in Mother's breasts, as if they owned them.

"You are only in the way!" Vinya yelled at Zelik, trying to get him out from underfoot. Vinya was determined to do all the work in the care of the babies. She rolled up tightly a long linen strap; she laid out a light blanket and small sheet and diaper in such a way that it would be easy for Mother to wrap a whole naked baby into it from chin to toe, hands inside, the baby swaddled and tied with the strap as with a bandage. The infant would be warm and safe that way, Mother believed, as did every woman in the village as far back as anyone could remember. Fanya liked to hold the babies, after Vinya or Mother had wrapped and strapped them neatly, and sing to them, quietly, and beautifully.

While Mother was still convalescing, Fanya helped Father to prepare special creamy soups and appetizers for Mother, and she let the other children taste them. Fanya hardly looked at her books, now, so busy was she with Mother and the babies. And Vinya and Mulik had little time for games. They either both watched the babies, or Vinya showed Mulik how she wrapped the infants and prepared their bed.

As Mother was getting stronger and livelier, Vinya was perfectly happy about the new babies. If only Father wouldn't have to leave! But his two weeks' leave was over, and the other children left for school. Vinya alone stayed with Mother, helping in the care of the twins. She was nine, but she felt fully old enough for the responsibility that came to her.



9: The Great Changes

MOTHER had to be out of the house a great deal, attending to Father's business. Vinya took care of the twin babies. She changed their elaborate wrappings several times a day, and when they cried, she carried them, one in each arm. Vinya was glad not to have to go to school, and to have a chance to play real mother with live babies instead of with dolls. When Mother came in to nurse them, Vinya stayed and watched, ready if Mother needed her. She even learned to give the babies a dose of poppy brew when they cried too much at night. Sometimes no rocking or singing would quiet them, but after a sip of the dark brown poppy brew, they would fall asleep soundly.

Busy as Vinya was with the twins, however, she had time to pick up war news from here and there. There were public wailings in the village, one after another, for news

would come that somebody's son or husband was killed in the war, or had died of wounds or typhus.

One day, Uncle, Father's oldest brother, came to spend two days at the house while on his way to the city Chernigov. Uncle was known for his talks with important men, his travels, and his reading. What Vinya liked about Uncle was his deep voice to which she awakened early in the mornings when he was their house guest. Every morning he sang the mournful religious Hebrew chants; sometimes the pitch was vibrating high, and the tune had a crying persistence, sometimes the chant swept broadly, evenly, and Uncle's smooth masculine voice seemed like a balm. There was a warmth in the rhythmic intonations and a pleasant familiarity in the rapidly spoken Hebrew prayers, although Vinya did not know the meaning of the words.

On this particular visit Vinya detected a definite short cut in Uncle's morning chant. After breakfast, instead of speaking in his usual thoughtful and indirect way, Uncle spoke in an angry, impatient tone. He talked about the czar and what went on in the capital of Russia, in Petrograd. Vinya became very curious and listened anxiously to the grown-up talk about the distant world outside of the village. She wanted to know what caused Uncle to speak so confidentially and importantly to Mother, who could barely read and write and was uneducated. But she couldn't understand it. Uncle explained things with gestures and conviction as he partook of various foods and drinks that Mother kept serving him. Although Mother didn't say much, assenting politely to what Uncle said and asking a simple question every now and then, she seemed very much interested. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes shone. "Surely some great good is going to happen—that's what Uncle's talk means," Vinya thought. "Maybe the war will

be over next week." But no, she couldn't gather that from Uncle's talk, either; he did not talk about war itself, or about peace, but about something more complicated, and bigger. Vinya felt there was something happy about Uncle's mysterious news, because Mother now looked almost jubilant, moving quickly, and making the rubies in her earrings sway and glow. Maybe Uncle had fresh news about Father. Hesitantly Vinya approached Mother with a question:

"Has Uncle seen Father lately?"

"No," answered Mother, "but Uncle has reason to think that Father will be home in a few weeks."

"How wonderful!" exclaimed Vinya.

"You mustn't talk to anyone about it, though," Mother warned, "because it's not certain."

"But . . . well . . ." Vinya looked at Mother questioningly, "what *else* did Uncle tell you? I could keep it a secret if you told me."

"Oh, you shouldn't be listening to what isn't meant for you! You are not old enough to understand!" answered Mother in the usual way of a loving but distant grownup.

Vinya sat on a bench with her foot in a long loop, rocking the big twin cradle, which was hung from the ceiling. She was rocking the babies and thinking how humiliating it was to be a mere child and not to understand important things. If only she were thirteen like Fanya, and as wise as her older sister!

Father did come home two weeks after Uncle's visit. Although the war was not over, he was discharged from war duty. He instantly resumed his business, and Mother went back to more housework and attention to the twins. The twins outgrew their wrappings now, and crawled all over the house. They crawled under the table and pulled on

the hanging fringes of the table cover. They dug into the egg baskets and threw eggs as if they were balls. When Mulik and Zelik came home, they had many games of telling the twins apart. How they howled with laughter when Mother discovered that she had given two baths to one and none to the other! The only certain distinction was Neska's little brown speck on the stomach. She soon learned to exhibit her identification mark whenever she was mistaken for Baska.

As soon as Fanya came back from school in the spring, Vinya showed off the twins to her. She could make them crow or cry, she could make them reach for anything as if they were trained dogs, or follow her, hanging to her skirts. They knew games with their fingers and games with their toes, and laughed infectiously at anything that was dropped or thrown. Fanya responded wholeheartedly to the twins, helped Vinya in the care of them, and sang to them, and they, in turn, climbed all over Fanya and begged for more songs.

Although the family was again together and busy with private affairs, something bigger than the family and home itself had come up. That mysterious talk that Uncle had brought to the house came to life again. Vinya understood now that the concern was with the czar Nicolai, the ruler of imperial Russia. She understood that his portrait, hung and worshiped in every dwelling in Russia, would soon be worshiped no longer. She understood that Czar Nicolai wasn't so great and mighty, after all. Fanya, now fourteen, read political books and talked on equal terms with Father. The most frequent words in their talk were "The People." It didn't mean just a few people one knew, but living humans everywhere in Russia and beyond Russia. But the Czar and all his nobles sitting in golden palaces, dressed in pearls

and diamonds, were *not* of The People. Oh, no! That was the whole thing, as Vinya understood it—the Czar didn't care for The People, and would never help them. Vinya noticed how scornfully Fanya looked at Czar Nicolai's portrait. She herself now felt strongly the need of belonging to The People. She knew that they were good. She felt, too, that something was soon going to happen *for* The People, in spite of the war that wasn't over yet.

Another word that came up often in the grown-up conversation that Fanya used, too, was the heavy word "history." Vinya was realizing that history was not all in books full of abstract dates. Fanya was reading books on history now the way she read novels. History became something real, something imminent, and Vinya waited for the first sound of it. In the waiting there was more groping for meaning.

The most important and strangely exciting word that was at the heart of the talking and the anxiety was the brilliant word "revolution." Vinya and Mulik and even Zelik were impressed by it, and never failed to hear it in grownups' conversation. "Revolution" meant action, lighted up with strong courage, leading people to something brilliantly new. Revolution was something daring yet absolutely good for The People. Revolution was something promising, as promising as a wrapped-up package is to children. Some new heroic names were connected with the Revolution, and Fanya knew them as well as she knew the heroic deeds.

Again, Father didn't have enough money, and Fanya didn't go to school in Gomel that winter. However, she continued her studies. She even worked out algebra problems with Father. But mostly she read volumes of books, which she got from Repki and Chernigov and Gomel.

She read and made careful notes in her clear, rounded hand. She read many big foreign books in translation, and smaller ones in French and in German. The books were marked History, and Philosophy, and Criticism, as well as Novels and Poetry. Vinya was especially interested in the Poetry, and discovered one small book written in the Ukrainian language used in peasant speech and native songs.

"This is our natural language, and we sing in it," said Vinya. She read it easily, for the Ukrainian alphabet is the same as the Russian.

"Of course it is," said Fanya. "And this book was printed secretly in Kiev." Vinya at once fell to reading the beautiful Ukrainian ballads by the revolutionary poet Shevchenko.

Fanya kept on reading and studying. The younger children nagged her to go coasting with them just once more, and Mother urged her to please stop reading and eat something, not just nibble, but Fanya paid only vague attention.

"What I am reading is very important, Mama," she'd say. And Mother would look dismayed. Although Mother condoned Fanya's striving for knowledge and admired her capacity for learning, this constant devouring of books seemed excessive and unhealthy to Mother. She hoped Fanya would get over it in time.

Then something happened one sunshiny, snowshiny February day. From the distant capital, from Petrograd, news rolled down to the little village of Svinopuhi, as well as to thousands of other villages, that the dreaded and worshiped czar was overthrown—chased away! *Crash* went his portraits from the walls everywhere, and revolution began. The uniformed, haughty officials who came to the village to give out the Czar's orders were sneered at and thrown out. The people were inspired with new courage and free-

dom to make demands. The doors of the village school were flung open, and public meetings were held there. The fastidious teacher who had well-kept quarters at the school moved out, and in her place came a bearded man who talked and ate with the peasants and took part in the meetings, speaking the native Ukrainian language.

Everything changed with breath-taking suddenness. Women who before had only listened to and obeyed their husbands and stayed home now came to public meetings and raised their hands and expressed themselves. Poor peasants were given land and stock that had belonged for generations to the rich squires. The rich baron was banished, and his gorgeous estate was to be used by the peasants. New songs came out of a clear sky. The spirited "Marseillaise," the French revolutionary song, had roused the people, and caught them, and pushed them on.

How beautifully Fanya sang the "Marseillaise"! The whole family added it at once to their after-supper singing. Other marvelous songs and marches of revolution and freedom were catching everybody. Even Father and Zelik, who were usually out of pitch, sang in unison. Something stronger than pitch carried the new songs. Even Mother, who was always cautious and restrained, was jubilant now.

"And there will really be free schools for everybody, so that we can educate all our children?" she asked. "Maybe Mulik can study to be a violinist," she added dreamily, "and learn to play like a man I heard in Gomel once. Ah, beautiful violin music!"

"Yes, all our people, including the peasants, Jews, everybody, will have schooling now," Father assured her with a generous gesture.

"Our people will learn how to do things, just as in America!" added Fanya.

"America?" gasped Vinya. "What is it like in America?"

"Many, many machines working for the people," answered Fanya. "We'll have machines and industry like Americans—later on."

"And who will have charge of everything," Mother asked, "to see that we get these wonderful things?" She was a bit skeptical now.

"Why, The People, of course!" Fanya answered convincingly. "And Kerenski is the leader." Then she pulled out a thin chain from inside her blouse and opened a tiny medallion with a picture of Kerenski in it. Vinya and the boys peered at the strange picture and handled the medallion.

Presently, there came a new and shocking argument in the house—religion. The children knew that Father, like Fanya, had become a skeptic and a disbeliever, and they felt sorry for Mother's weaker arguments. "Can you prove that churches or synagogues helped people in real need?" Fanya asked, boldly.

"But religion has existed for many hundreds of years—isn't it proof enough?" Mother persisted.

"But, Mama, you think because something has been in existence a long time, it *must* be good, even if it is useless, or even corrupt?"

"Yet, you used to read Hebrew and say prayers when you were little," Mother reminded, with challenge.

Fanya took up the challenge with sharp rebuttal: "Because I used to doesn't mean that I can't change as I grow. Don't you believe that people can change when times are changing and needs are great? The religion we had for centuries in Russia cannot possibly serve the workers now. It would even hold them back. And besides, religion divides

people—Christians hate Jews, and Jews don't trust Christians."

The children listened wide-eyed. How simple it all was, Vinya suddenly thought! Religion poisons relations between people. It kept her out of games with children. That is why Fanya was against religion.

Although the war was still going on, the word "soldier" changed its meaning, too. The soldier now, like the worker and the peasant, was one of The People. A soldier was to build the new civil life, and was to fight for the Revolution.

"Is there a new kind of war now?" asked Vinya.

"Yes," Fanya was ready to explain, "the Czar's generals and all the rich lords and squires don't want The People to rule. For them, the Czar was better, so they are trying to stop the Revolution. We have to fight them."

"It's a different war, though," added Mulik. "Russians are fighting in Russia against Russians."

"This war is more fierce than the Czar's war with foreign countries," lamented Mother. "The rich people should get back their property. Then they wouldn't be so mad."

"But you don't understand, Mama," Fanya argued. "That wouldn't settle anything now. If the rich ones, the *bourgeoisie*, got their property and privileges, it wouldn't be fair to all our poor working people, the proletariat. After the war, the good changes will come, Mama, and we will work hard for it." Fanya spoke positively, and the positiveness filled her with strength.

Then came October, earth-shaking Red October, with a new revolution, and a new government. After that, everything new was Red. The Red Army, the Red Schools, the Red Youth! Down went the weakling Kerenski and his

provisional government. Fanya threw away his picture, medallion and all.

"The Kerenski government will never come back," she declared.

A great *new* government was established, to be defended by the Red Army. It was the Soviet Government. The Soviet Government was to build the new life for The People, and it was led by a great and strong man named Lenin. People soon realized how much he cared for them, and there were many songs made about Lenin. The songs were made in all parts of the great country no longer called Russia but The Soviet Union. The word "Russia" now applied officially only to the "Great-Russian Republic."

Fanya read everything she could get hold of about Lenin, his beliefs and his strategy in carrying the Revolution through. She talked about politics with Father and she talked heatedly about the new political force, which was called "Bolshevism." Fanya declared that the party of Bolsheviks, to which Lenin also belonged, was to lead. Other numerous revolutionary parties, trying to build the new life, were to be disregarded. There was no confusion about it, declared Fanya. Lenin proves in his writing that the Bolshevik party is to lead The People. Then we mustn't let the other parties hinder. Vinya listened with alertness to the single-mindedness of Fanya's talk.

Everyone felt there was something fearful in the word Bolshevik, something daring and courageous, yes, but also fearful. The people who didn't want to take part in the revolutionary war wished to avoid the Bolsheviks.

"They cause so much destruction," Mother complained again. "Look at all the people that get arrested on suspicion, and all the goods confiscated from merchants! If they'd only be more lenient . . ."

"But things have to be destroyed if they are bad at the core—the czarist backwardness, the illiteracy and superstition—you know, Mama, how bad those things are for The People, and we would have had them for hundreds of years more if not for the Revolution. And now we *are* building a new society, and a new and better country!" How beautifully Fanya spoke, with what perfect words! She understood so clearly everything she said, with a sure, strong feeling. The younger children caught the direction and the tempo of the older sister's speech. But Mother was not to be swept away. To her, Fanya was a young, inexperienced girl and the new things she represented were shocking.

"Not everything was bad before, though," Mother persisted, "and now there is only fighting of every kind."

"But, Mother," Fanya replied, "when our enemies are attacking us, we have to fight them. We will certainly fight desperately, and if necessary kill them." Mother was scandalized to hear such speeches from her young daughter, and she began to feel estranged from her. The other children were all attention. They felt sorry for Mother, and waited for word from Father. But Father did not want to take sides. He said it wasn't time yet to judge the results of the Revolution. He wasn't ready either to condemn the Bolsheviks or to have implicit faith in them.

"How about the new Health Station in Repki? Fanya says we'll have them in all the villages!" Mulik put in excitedly. "The educated doctors and nurses are certainly different from the old ignorant sheptuhas, who go about whisper-whisper-whisper," and Mulik promptly imitated the mystic gestures, the nonsensical verses of the old sorcerers, and everyone laughed heartily at that.

But Mother held her own about the civil war. "If we

could bring the good changes peacefully—" she insisted, to Fanya's annoyance.

Fanya sang the Soviet anthem, the "Internationale," and taught it to the other children: "Arise . . . ye hungry and enslaved . . . We'll build our own new world; and who had naught—will now have all! Oh, this is our final battle . . ."

There were so many battles—so many wars with suddenly famous and instantly infamous enemy generals! People talked about them with fear and anger. The names of Kolchak and Denikin and Wrangel were commonly heard even among children. All of them were treacherous enemies of the Red Army, and foreign countries were getting mixed in on the enemies' side. The world was on the enemies' side, and hard fighting was ahead. Germany was an enemy again, too, stepping into the Ukraine. And the Red Army alone was fighting all the enemies.

With all the fighting and the frequent changes of government and the danger everywhere, Fanya made a resolution to give up the comfortable life at home with the family. She had enough of reading and of thinking. She was ready for action now.

"This is no time for soft living," she said convincingly. She decided to go to the city of Chernigov, wearing a simple, coarse dress, leaving behind all the lovely clothes that Mother had sewn and embroidered for her. When Mother turned her head aside, wiping her eyes with her apron, Fanya looked at her clear-eyed and with raised head—"This is no time for tears." And she continued: "I am going to teach factory workers reading and writing, and Lenin's ideas."

Mother continued her protests. "The child is talking out of her head! How could a girl of fifteen mingle with factory men? She'll be ruined! Oh, God have mercy!"

"How can you be so unenlightened, Mama?" Fanya retorted. "Factory workers are the ones that count most now. They are the builders of the future, and they suffered most under the czar."

Father offered no argument. Mother wept. All the younger children clung to Mother, yet looked admiringly at their big sister and felt her independence. They had never known factory workers, yet Fanya's concern stirred them, and their minds reached out to hers.





10:

The Invasion

SO many changes took place in the entire country two years after the Revolution started that the word "Russia" itself practically disappeared. Several other names were used commonly, the initials U.S.S.R., the casual "Soviet Russia," the common "Soviet Land" or "Soviet Union," or even the familiar "Union." People used all these names naturally and with a new pride. New things were springing up in the Soviet Land, magically—new money, new kinds of books for children, new schools, and new rules with which it was hard to keep up. New promises and new hopes

filled the people's hearts and gave them energy. The children and young people were especially proud of their new country and of their songs and flags and parades!

But there were also many terrible things happening. The worst of all was the counterrevolution. The very word was dreadful! All the Soviet enemies, native and foreign, were engaged in active battle with the Red Army. They were called counterrevolutionaries and there were ever so many of them, the short-lived armies of big generals and bandit groups who belonged to the bigger armies and robbed and massacred all Jews; the vengeful White Army, ruled by former Russian aristocrats and aided by foreign governments, fighting everywhere, and even a Green Army that constantly threatened the Red Army. The enemies would smash into villages and towns, start a government, and even make money of their own. But they would always be driven out by the Red Army in a few weeks or days. Then the Soviet government would rule once more, and make its money, and the people would have to get used to it all over again.

Fanya came home for a few months during the unrest, but the family was reconciled now to her independence and accepted her presence as that of a wonderful visitor. A whole Red Army regiment was stationed in the village at that time, and living in the people's homes. Three soldiers were with the family, sleeping on the hard couch, on chairs, and on the floor. The children were delighted with the companionship of the soldiers. They were friendly and amiable, told stories readily, and drew pictures for Zelik. They cleaned and deloused themselves as best they could in the crowded quarters.

One of the soldiers played a guitar and accompanied the others in singing. What strength there was in the soldiers'



choral singing, what power in the rhythm and in the unison, what comforting sweetness in the tunes! The soldiers shared in the family's food like guests, and to an extent shared in their lives.

Fanya was particularly equal and familiar with the soldiers, although she was only fifteen. They talked, now simply and concretely, now theoretically, of the current revolutionary war and of the wonderful improvements that would be coming with the peace. Fanya read aloud from books and magazines, and the Red Army soldiers were most attentive and full of admiration. They admired Fanya's clear mind and calm, reserved manner, and her lovely wistful face. She played the guitar and sang with them, their voices harmonizing beautifully.

In spite of the sense of safety that came from the presence of the Red Army soldiers, everyone knew that the dreaded enemy, Denikin's army, was not far away. Sounds of guns could be heard with reverberating echoes of the shots. The children huddled on the top of the brick oven early in the evenings and repeated stories of atrocities that they had heard were inflicted by Denikin's men. Father and Mother made an effort to be consoling and confident, but they, too, seemed frightened. Only the soldiers and Fanya were confident and hopeful.

Father and Mother continued with daily family cares and business and provisions, but they had a new concern, which grew in intensity as the battle of Denikin became more audible by day and by night. Atrocity stories were now authenticated by people who ran away from Denikin's occupation. Father and Mother discussed desperately plans for hiding the children when it might become necessary, and burying all valuables at once. Secretly, they sewed bags and tied up bundles and packed away linens and furs, bed-

ding and odd family jewels. Bricks were carefully taken out of walls, and the cavities filled, the walls whitewashed and made to look the same again. Holes were dug in the yard at night and the treasures of the family were buried and the ground made to look inconspicuous. Secret passages were drilled in the hayloft, and there silver and gold were dropped.

One night no one undressed to go to bed. The neighboring village, only a few miles away, had been occupied by Denikin, and apparently set on fire. The flames were visible, and there was the terrible smell of the smoke, as well as the sound of the cracklings and the shots and shouts. Then the noise subsided for a while but no one knew whether for better or for worse. By morning there was rejoicing news. The enemy was driven back, and the Red Army had re-occupied the neighboring village! Then in the following days there was news of the further crushing of Denikin's army by the Red Army.

When the general tension in the region subsided, the Red Army soldiers left the village of Svinopuhi. Fanya left for the city Chernigov again. She soon wrote the family that she was working in a large government kindergarten, as well as studying and doing political work. She had taken all her fine clothes from home to please Mother, but had given them all away, including shoes, to fellow workers who she thought were in need of them.

When the Germans forced their way into the Ukraine, they looted villages and towns and even took over cities, establishing their kind of order, as if they were rightful masters. They came into Chernigov, too, and one awful summer day into the village Svinopuhi. They drove in haughtily on horses, and marched in arrogantly on foot, with frightening noise and shouts and pomp.

"So this is a Bolshevik village!" they shrieked. "Tear it asunder!" They flashed swords and pointed pistols and intimidated everybody, grownups and children. They entered the peasants' cottages rudely, and grabbed everything in sight. Six Germans broke through the door of Father's small store without bothering to knock or use the latch. Mother rushed into the store with Father, but he very anxiously and angrily told her to remain in the house with the babies and not let the Germans see her. Mother had to obey, but the two boys and Vinya, who were already in the store, stayed and watched the Germans. One of them pointed with his sword to the shelf with leather for boots. "How much, *Master?*" Father told them quietly the correct price. It sounded as if some stranger's voice were speaking, and Father wasn't there at all. In reply to what he said, they all roared with laughter, and the laughter kept on for a horribly long time; first it was derisive, then it became contemptuous, and then mad, hysterical, interrupted with cursing and spitting.

Mother was huddling the babies in the house, while the other children were on the scene of vandalism in the store. The boys were crouching behind nail kegs, frightened yet unwilling to leave Father. Vinya cringed and sickened at the Germans' beastliness. If only she could exercise some magic to make them go away! Then the sight of Father's humiliation filled her with such powerful anger and hatred toward the Germans that she wanted to fling a hatchet into their cruel faces. She knew Father had hatchets for sale in the store. If she could quickly climb up to the shelf and reach one—then the German with the stony blue eyes and insulting, twisted mouth wouldn't glare and abuse Father any longer.

Rage displaced all fear and hesitancy in Vinya now. She

climbed up on a barrel of salt, from there to the barrel of sugar, and with another grasp she reached the leather shelf near which the hatchets were hanging on a wall. Now, only one swing of the left hand while holding on with the right, and her purpose would be accomplished. At that moment, the stone-eyed German, startled by the climbing child, stiffened and poked Vinya in the ribs with the sheath of his sword. She automatically let go with her right hand and jumped onto the counter near where Father was standing. Rage pounded in her body, and tears blinded her.

"What's that you've got there?" demanded the German in his guttural way. Then he reached for a hatchet himself and split the shelf with the leather. At his signal, another German took a hatchet, and they split other shelves, and tore and threw and scattered goods. The boys started crying behind the kegs and Vinya clung to Father, but Father with gestures and glances ordered the children to run into the house before any harm befell them.

As soon as the Germans left the store, Father rushed into the house, and told everybody that a good hiding place should be prepared in the barn at once. He thought the Germans were likely to raid the house. Everybody helped with the task. Bedding was put in the hay, crocks of food were hidden in the oats barrel, a small lamp and matches were stuck upon a rafter in the midst of thick cobwebs. Mother and Father were relieved that the valuables were already hidden. The family slept huddled in the barn. Father kept guard most of the night, and buried a few more provisions and some money in a hole in the woodshed. He then piled the wood over it in the usual way so it could never be noticed.

The next day there were new scenes of violence in the streets. The Germans wanted to know who were the Bol-

sheviks, the supporters of the new government. Of course, no one admitted being a Bolshevik. So the Germans thought up a scheme to detect the Bolsheviks; they decided to search every cottage, and if they found anything of a red color, that would be sufficient proof that a Bolshevik lived in that cottage. Everyone frantically hid and tore and burned any clothing with red in it. But the Germans found a man with a pair of holiday trousers, trimmed with red along the seams. The Germans shouted coarsely and dragged the innocent man into the street. They took a strong rope from the man's house and tied one end of it around the man and the other onto a horse's harness. Then they made the horse drag the man on the ground all through the village. The whole horde of German soldiers watched it as if it were a perfectly right and amusing thing. Some of the villagers, too, watched with stunned, dull expressions the bruising and breaking of one of their kind. Some wailed and hid. And some cursed under their breaths and made wordless decisions for revenge.

On the third day such a tumult filled the village as was never heard before. While the people still slept restlessly and the Germans snored confidently, a whole regiment of Red Army soldiers plunged into the village with happy shouts and singing. How the Germans fled, wild-eyed! The stone-eyed one kicked his horse so hard, anxious to go fast, that he fell over backward and was shot. The wagon full of goods that had been stolen from the people was left standing.

After that, the Red Army soldiers camped in the village for a while; the Germans were likely to spring back, and it was still unsafe in the area.

The family moved out of the barn, but they left the buried valuables in their hiding places.



11:

Tovarishi

THE Red Army soldiers wore drab uniforms and torn shoes, but they had bright stars in their caps and friendly ways. Weary and dusty though they were, after a bit of rest, they looked fresh and gay. When the people gathered for a celebration and speeches and for making decisions, the soldiers gave a concert outdoors. Vinya and Mulik thought this was the most wonderful thing that had ever

happened in Svinopuhi. Perhaps Zelik thought so, too, but he only acted stunned at first, and after a while was indifferent. Vinya and Mulik were in complete accord about the great wonder of a band concert, which they had never heard before. When they came to the meeting place near the schoolhouse, they noticed at once the soldiers with shiny wind instruments and cymbals and a drum. They were overcome with curiosity and excitement. How would the music sound?

They sat as close as possible on the new wooden seats. Soon, one soldier rose gracefully, made a wonderful quick gesture with his arms and hands, and struck a little stick in the air. All the children held their mouths open with wonder. Mulik nudged Vinya, and Vinya was stiff with suspense. At the direction of the little stick, a lovely sound floated out of a horn and made a real tune. Vinya was charmed. It was so much more surprising than singing. But just as she was relaxing ready to listen to more of the tune, there was a sudden crash of cymbals. The loudness and unexpectedness of the sound made Vinya fall right out of her seat. She quickly climbed up and listened with her whole body to this remarkably loud band music that was full of rhythm and movement. Mulik, too, listened intently, and kept time with his feet and head. When the assembly was over, all the village children gathered around the musicians. One little boy said:

"I'll be a Red Army soldier when I grow up, and I will beat with a stick on a big tub like that." Mulik was admiring the drum, also, and the soldier who was holding it said, "Go ahead, beat the drum. Don't be afraid."

Timidly, then with force, Mulik struck the drum, and was all red with excitement. Zelik was making funny faces

in the reflection of a brass horn. The musicians laughed good-naturedly.

"Well, small ones," said one of them, "maybe some of you will be musicians—in our Soviet Land musicians will be useful. The People need music as well as bread." And another soldier winked at the speaker and said in a half whisper, pointing to the assembled, eager-eyed children:

"They understand—don't you worry. Those little rascals understand all right."

After a few days the Red Army soldiers had orders to go to a region where they had to fight counterrevolution.

Following the soldiers' band concert, musical stage shows became very important in the children's lives. In the village of Buyanki, some three miles away, a "People's Theater" was being started. The peasants from the neighboring villages who had never even heard the word "theater" flocked to see the shows. Father's sister and her family lived in Buyanki, and one family often visited the other. One time when there was a show in Buyanki, Father agreed to take Vinya and the boys to see it. What a festive occasion it was! Mother brushed up the best clothes for them, and packed some plum jelly for the relatives.

"What a shame Mother has to stay home with the babies!" Mulik kept saying. "Now, Neska and Baska! You give Mother a show, all right?" Then he clapped his hands, stamped his feet and whistled a dance tune for the twins. They laughed, wiggled, and tapped to Mulik's rhythm.

"You know what I wish?" said Vinya wistfully. "I wish Fanya were here instead of in Chernigov—she could play her guitar in the show."

The Buyanki show was being given in the priest's big house, which had been taken away from him for that purpose, and the priest was given an ordinary cottage. In the

largest room of this big house, there was a newly built crude stage with a huge burlap curtain. The festive audience was crowding on chairs and benches. There were bright kerchiefs, gay sashes, and flowers. Not only the hall, but the porch and window sills were packed with grownups and children from several near-by villages. Father and Vinya were lucky to have seats, and they held the boys on their laps. Aunt and her family were perching and standing near by. Cousin Sonya, a girl of fifteen, with red cheeks and long black braids, was in the show.

"This is the fifth show we've had this month," boasted a girl of Vinya's age, who was her cousin. "And an actor from Repki brought a new play yesterday, and our Sonya will have a part in it!" Vinya and Mulik were very much impressed by this.

"If Fanya were home, we would start a theater in Svinopuhi," said Mulik.

"But Fanya is helping with the Revolution in the city," Vinya said importantly.

"You know," the cousin went on excitedly, "Maryusya was at our house last week. She told us that their village started a Moonlight Theater, and they had wonderful shows for all the people out-of-doors on a stage in the moonlight. Maryusya has a leading role in a Ukrainian opera."

"Opera!" exclaimed Mulik and Vinya at once. "In the moonlight!" But they said nothing more, for everyone in the audience suddenly grew quiet and looked toward the stage at a village girl with a wreath of flowers on her head, standing in front of the curtain.

"*Tovarishi*," she addressed the audience—"comrades"—instead of the old-fashioned "*gospoda*"—"ladies and gentlemen." She spoke the native Ukrainian, and told the audience that in the new Soviet Land, free theaters for the



people were springing up everywhere. She said that theaters were wonderful to educate as well as to entertain grownups and children. She also said that Lenin's wishes and prophecies were coming true, and that all the villages would soon have even electricity!

"Long live the Revolution! Long live the People's Theater!" she exclaimed at the end, and everyone clapped thunderously. Then there was complete quiet and the curtain wriggled aside, and the stage was full of boys and girls with balalaikas. Sonya was in front with a wreath of flowers on her head, a full smile on her round face, and a balalaika in her lap. The leader, also with a balalaika, nodded and moved his lips toward the musicians, and all at once they struck up a merry, tinkly, teasing aria. The players smiled and nodded, the audience was pleased and smiling, then everyone clapped warmly at the end. After that, Sonya sang alone, a beautiful sad folk song. Her clear high singing was followed by a rich chorus with perfect unison and harmony. The audience was starry-eyed with admiration, and breathlessly quiet. When the chorus finished, Aunt confided to Father that the singers had practiced at her house.

"Excellent, excellent!" agreed Father, clapping together with the rest. And now the whole audience was on its feet singing lustily, resonantly, the "Internationale," and after that came the intermission.

In a few minutes a little bell tinkled, and all the people quickly scurried to their seats and to better standing places. Everything became quiet in anxious readiness. A young accordion player was on the stage. He had a big shiny accordion, magnificent, compared to the little old ones played at village weddings and dances. He played a roar-

ing rumbling piece, then a quieter one with the balalaikas backstage adding a special rhythm. Suddenly, the playing changed to a vigorous, danceable rhythm. A group of village boys and soldiers bounced onto the stage, and leaped and twirled. Then a group of girls quietly tiptoed onto the stage, and each boy at once caught an armful of a girl and sailed into a dance. What exactness and swiftness in all the steps! How much better and more exciting than the regular village dancing! The people in the audience glued their eyes to the stage, yet moved their shoulders and feet to the music. Mulik could hardly keep himself from jumping onto the stage. Vinya wished that the dance show would never stop. But sadly enough, it did stop and that was the end of the whole show.

When everybody was finally pressed out of the crowd, Father and the children followed Aunt and her family to her house. Aunt served tea from a round, fat samovar. Delicious little poppy-seed cakes were on the table and Mother's plum jelly. Sonya laughed and chatted as everyone praised her singing.

"But my voice wasn't so good today," she remarked, asking for more compliments, and plenty more were given her, so that vanity trickled into her gay laughter.

When it was time to leave, Aunt gave Vinya a bowl of special cherry cakes to take to Mother. Vinya held them in her lap as the children and Father were seated in the wagon, ready to drive home under the starlit sky. The wagon wobbled and rocked, and the horse's hoofs clopped musically on the dry road. Vinya closed her eyes and listened, and felt imaginary things, and dreamed and dozed.

They arrived home too soon, and sleepily tumbled out of the wagon. But by the time the children got into the

house, they were awake again. Vinya gave Mother the cherry cakes and promptly told her about Sonya's beautiful singing. Mulik at once performed the whole of the dance with all the leaps and spins, and Zelik made a speech with generous gestures of the arms, and a daring expression on his face.

"Tovarishi!" he kept repeating to the imaginary audience, now seriously, now argumentatively, and then endearingly and promisingly. Vinya and Mulik laughed heartily at that, and so did Father and Mother.

Soon the amusement was over, for Mother told about near-by battles of which she heard from a neighbor.

"A horde of bandits invaded a village five miles from here, and killed all the three Jewish families who lived there." The children were listening but didn't say anything. How far is five miles? How soon could it be reached? They speculated.

"I think Mulik and Vinya are old enough to go to Chernigov and go to the new school there. It is safer in the city for them. Chernigov is already retaken from the Germans, and again from Denikin. They can live with Fanya—that house belongs to quiet old people, and nobody would bother them there." Then Mother and Father looked at each other questioningly. Mulik and Vinya were too excited to say anything sensible. Then Mother went on, "We could send provisions for the three of them. Vinya, could you see that Mulik and Fanya eat well?"

"Of course I would," she cried.

"It's best that you go to a big school now, daughter. You've missed enough on account of the babies. And I think you will like the city."

"I know I'll like it!" Mulik asserted. "I heard that schools in Chernigov give out free theater tickets to the students.

And the classes go on excursions to the woods, so I could collect some birds' eggs!"

"I wish I were young and could go to the new free school," said Father, "but I'll have to be content with getting you settled in the city."





12: On the River Desna

CHERNIGOV was a small city laid out above the river Desna. The Desna was always lively in the summer, with people boating, or swimming without clothes—men on one side, women on the other. Ships frequently went to and came from the bigger river Dniepr, reaching to the city of Kiev farther south.

Early in the spring the people from the city crossed the Desna on thawing cakes of ice to get the first pussy willows in the woods. All summer long the shouts and laughter of picnickers could be heard from across the river. Good swimmers crossed the river easily.

There was a magnificent old park with sky-scraping trees and nightingales in Chernigov, and in another part of the city was a gay public boulevard for promenading. There was also a new children's library and a Ukrainian Opera in Chernigov, but to the children, nothing was more enticing than the river. As the opening of the school was postponed indefinitely, they had plenty of time to explore the banks of the river.

One time Fanya took her younger sister and brother on a boating trip. It was unforgettable to Vinya, for she was anxious to meet Fanya's friends. There were five of them, the girls about sixteen and the boys somewhat older. One of the girls wore rope sandals without stockings and a dark, boyish shirt. Vinya couldn't take her eyes off the girl's boyish haircut. She missed a feminine softness in it, and was fascinated by its strangeness. Yet, it was becoming popular, Vinya observed, for she had seen it on many young girls. Fanya and her companions talked ardently about political news and ideas, freely using big, new words. How clever and grown-up they all are, Vinya thought, and she considered herself to be a very privileged eleven-year-old to be in their company.

All the boys in the group wore the typical Ukrainian shirts with embroidered collars and cuffs and sashes. Fanya was wearing a light-red kerchief tied in the back of her head, and she held her guitar under her arm. A gay spirit spread through everyone in the party, and Mulik and Vinya felt especially happy and welcome in this group of modern young people. As soon as all were distributed in the right places in the large, rented rowboat, and Volodya, the young, quiet fellow with blond locks of hair, had adjusted the four oars, one of the girls started a song. Fanya picked up the accompaniment, and the rest joined in the

singing. Mulik and Vinya sang earnestly and without lagging. The singing flowed along with the gliding boat, with the soft splashing of the oars, with the swishing of Mulik's bare feet dangling in the water. As they came near the opposite shore and near the woods, an echo came in like a chorus.

But the rented boat had to be returned before dark, and the river trip had to be ended abruptly. All the boys and girls took turns in rowing hard and straight for the dock.

When the three of them were returning home in the evening, Fanya led the way through the little white gate around the front veranda and into the garden.

"This is the window to our room, you know," she pointed. Mulik at once got the idea.

"Shall I open it and climb in?" he asked. Fanya nodded. "We won't need to bother going through the landlady's parlor to get to our room," she explained. "But don't think there is a thief if you hear someone climbing through the window when you are in bed," she warned. "Volodya might come over to read his poems."

"Oh!" Vinya exclaimed with a great deal of interest, for she liked the young man's deep, poetic glance and strong voice and his attentiveness to Fanya. She climbed into the room after Fanya, and decided to keep herself awake at all cost to hear Volodya's own poems.

It seemed odd to Vinya to be living in the elegant city house of a stranger instead of in her own home in the village, among peasants whom she knew so well. It seemed odd, yet interesting, and Vinya wanted to get used to it. When she felt a tug of homesickness, she didn't let the tears overcome her. Instead, she made up her mind that she was old enough now not to mind being away from home. Mulik, who had been away from home before when he

was in school in Repki, seemed to like the city as well as though he had always been here.

Fanya was busy from early morning till evening, and many evenings, too. She was teaching, she was going to school in the afternoons, she was attending innumerable meetings and conferences for the making of plans and programs. She was an active member of the Youth Club, and was head over heels in the concrete work of building a new life. She was also becoming a specialist now, in a new profession called preschool education. She brought home stiff, new songbooks and picture books and humorous stories for little children. In another month Fanya was going to be a nursery school teacher.

Listening to Fanya's accounts of the modern work with little children, and watching her in a real school, Vinya decided that she, too, would become a nursery school teacher.

The most appealing, the most inspiring quality of the nursery schools was the sure feeling of care toward all the children. Any discrimination or unfairness was simply unthinkable in such a school, Vinya realized with relief. And it is a *school*, Vinya continued thinking, when the children sing and dance and build—all joyous things—and the grownups and children are together. That seemed especially wonderful to Vinya, and made her want to be a teacher of free and happy little children. She confided her ambition to Mulik, and together they talked of the future and compared it with the past. The past seemed like an era many centuries back.

"Remember the taunts and the mud balls we got one time after the village kids chased us because their parents said we were 'Christ-killers'?" Mulik recalled.

"I know!" Vinya replied. "I don't even think about it

any more. I am forgetting the bad things that happened to me before the Revolution and how scared I was in school." And, as was natural to her, Vinya dismissed the unpleasant thoughts of the past and turned her active attention to the present.

Both Vinya and Mulik marveled at their big sister's devotion to work and her Sunday occupation with study and meetings. How they admired her for it! One day, the happiest of all, their big sister took Vinya and Mulik to the Big Theater. Being a worker and student, she was able to get a certain number of free theater tickets.

Mulik and Vinya could hardly breathe from excitement. They walked fast to catch up with Fanya's striding, swinging steps through the crowded boulevard full of Red soldiers in boots and khaki; full of laughing couples and playing children. Many people pushed and rushed and ran with anxious expressions on their faces, hoping to get in line in time to get tickets. Mulik and Vinya both clutched their precious tickets, as Fanya, head high, smiling, led them through the entrance hall, through a darkened, carpeted corridor, past rows and rows of elevated seats from any of which the stage could be seen, and into central orchestra seats, only ten rows from the stage. Out of a mysterious pit in front of the immense, heavy velvet curtain came soft sounds of string instruments. All the seats were filling up rapidly with eager people. Mulik discovered the high balcony packed completely like a crate of eggs packed by Father, not a tiniest space unused. Vinya was listening to the music, watching the electric lights shining from many directions, and the lovely heavy curtain with soft moving folds. People began to look at watches; voices were lowered ready to stop at the first notice, all noise subsided. Fanya turned around and looked restlessly toward the

door, for she was waiting for Volodya. He came rushing and on tiptoe, slid panting into his seat, and adjusted his hair by tossing his head. He greeted Fanya with a warm glance and handshake, and shook hands with Vinya and Mulik also. Now, all was well.

People's eyes were directed at the slowly parting curtain. The stage came alive, aglow with a completely separate world, rich in feeling and movement, entirely convincing and fascinating, beyond anything else. Distant heroes and cities and things long gone came near to them as they gazed. Deep joy and profound sorrow crept into their hearts. Women of dreamlike beauty were there for them to behold, and beautiful speech and clever conversation held them in tight attention. And everything was absolutely real. It *couldn't* be just play acting, Vinya told herself. It must be true.

During the intermission, she was impatient for the curtain to rise again, and when the play was over, she sighed with regret. She kept whispering words of wonder to Fanya and to Mulik. She dreamed about the play.

Although Mulik had enjoyed the play at the Big Theater, he still remembered that he hadn't seen the Ukrainian Opera except surreptitiously through the open door, when he hung around the building.

The Ukrainian Opera was the most popular entertainment in the city, and all the tickets were either sold or given out weeks in advance. Mulik was determined, however, and decided he would try a trick. He usually thought of tricks when he couldn't solve a problem. He had watched carefully the actors and dancers going through a separate entrance backstage, and noticed that there were some children among them. Since Mulik had a special talent for imitating anyone, he walked through the actors' entrance with the

ease and familiarity of a person doing the usual sort of thing. He loitered a while amidst the busy dressing rooms, nodding his head casually to an absent-minded singer looking for his wig, just as if he most certainly belonged there. When a rushing actress bumped into him and offered rapid apology, Mulik answered with annoyance, "It isn't even safe to walk around here!" and ambled on. He didn't hurry, he didn't sneak, but neither did he look anybody in the face. He just meandered through the backstage, and from there he stepped down into the audience.

Mulik found himself an excellent box-view seat on the window sill, and laid his cap there to reserve it. Neither the quickly gathering audience nor the confused ushers paid any attention to him. It was fifteen minutes before the curtain rose. The huge symphony orchestra was tuning up in the pit, like frogs in a pond before the rain. Mulik asked the usher for a program just as if he had forgotten it when he had gone through the front door. Then he walked over to the door and told the guard that he had to go out, and would like a readmission check, the way people did when they had entered regularly. When he got it, he sauntered into the crowd near the opera house, and found Vinya looking out for him, anxious and puzzled. He handed her the readmission check and told her to go in without fear.

"But have you another, for yourself?" Vinya asked.

"No, I'll get in the same way as before." Then he told her how he did it. They both laughed so hard about it that people turned their heads and smiled involuntarily.

The opera with the bright costumes, beautiful singing, and exciting dancing was even more wonderful than the theater and more impressive to Mulik. He was completely enchanted by it. He was so beside himself with enjoyment that he made up his mind to see it again the following night!

When they climbed through the window into their room that night, Fanya was already home reading a magazine. Vinya did not have to tell her about the opera, for Mulik quickly got into a loose nightshirt, tied a towel around his waist, struck his fist on a wooden bowl on the table, and went through the opera, with all the exaggerated gestures. He did all the dances without omitting a step. Even when he finished, he didn't seem exhausted, for instead of falling, he leaped and bounced into his bed.

"Irrepressible!" called Fanya. "Time to go to sleep!"

As they were all settled for sleep, there was a knock on their window sill, and a hand reached into the darkness. Mulik drew back for a moment, his head on the alert.

"Anybody home?" came a girl's voice.

"Why, Sonya!" shouted Mulik, and gallantly tightened his nightshirt in the front.

"Climb right in," invited Fanya. "Did you just come in from Buyanki today?"

"Yes, one of our peasants came to the city with a load of wood, and gave me a ride," answered Sonya. "I am going to start studying singing in Chernigov." She bent over the sill, her braids reaching nearly to the floor. "Oh, I didn't know there were so many of you here in one room!" she exclaimed.

"We'll have room for you to sleep," said Mulik. "I'll let you have my bed, of course!"

"Oh, no, don't bother. I can sleep on the floor."

"I insist," said Mulik with a theatrical bow, "and I will find me a perfectly nice private place to sleep in." Everyone was amused at this, curious to see what trick Mulik would invent next.

"He'll probably climb under the bed," said Vinya, "and pretend it's a palace bedroom, or something of the sort."

Mulik looked around a bit. He poked his head into the closet carefully, giving the impression that there was a sleeping baby there and must not be disturbed. Then he pulled a large drawer from under the closet and looked at it in a manner of complete satisfaction, as if there were in front of him a bed perfect in every requirement. He made a gesture to indicate that the "bed" was very high, and that when he climbed into it he relaxed superbly—while in reality, he placed himself in a hard narrow wooden box on the floor! But he did sleep there. In the morning he flew out of the box as if he were a hen and quickly woke up everybody.

In the morning, Sonya talked about the news of her acting in the village theater and of being invited to join the opera in Repki.

"A Ukrainian Opera in Repki!" exclaimed Mulik. "I wouldn't mind being in Repki now!"

"But we were told it was very dangerous to live in villages and small towns because of the bandits in the near-by woods," Sonya said. "So our whole family is moving to the city here next week."

"For good?" asked Mulik. "With everything in your house?"

"No, just the things that can be moved," answered Sonya. Then she changed the subject. "How do you like the new school?" Mulik and Vinya had to shrug their shoulders and explain that the opening had been delayed for repairs, but that they were looking forward to the new school. Sonya looked perturbed again.

"I hope no bandits come to Repki," Sonya said with concern. "You should see all the improvements and excitements in Repki now."

"Tell us," urged Fanya, who hadn't seen the town for

several years. Sonya described the wonderful May Day parade that went through the town's main street, which was lately renamed The Revolution Street. There were garlands of flowers, and singing and dancing, and a theatrical performance by the Jewish Club.

"I can hardly believe it," said Fanya. "The only public sound that could be heard when I was there before the Revolution was the loud church bell—everything else was hushed and hidden."

"Have you seen Zelik or our Babushka?" Mulik asked. Sonya shook her head in reply, she could give them no news of either.

"I wish Zelik weren't so lazy at school," Vinya complained, "then he would learn to write and we would know what goes on."

"I wish Babushka could write. Then she would teach Zelik, too," Mulik remarked. "But our kind Babushka is illiterate."

"Oh, I forgot to tell you," Sonya exclaimed, "your father was at our house in Buyanki last week, and my mother gave him the idea that he should move to the city with the whole family, too!"

"What did he say?" asked Vinya eagerly.

"Well, he seemed to agree," Sonya answered.

"And do people feel it is safe in Repki for the Jews?"

"A lot of people were worried," Sonya admitted. "They heard news of counterrevolution in near-by towns."

Vinya wished that the family were safely together somewhere, anywhere. The next day, however, no more bad news was heard, so there were no worries, and the children fell into the swing of the busy, wonderful life of the city.



13:

The New School

THE schools in the city were called Workers' Schools to indicate that they were free to all people and were not private and exclusive as they were before the revolution. And, of course, there was no restriction at all against any nationality. Each school had its own name, too, in honor of a revolutionary hero or a popular author. The school that Mulik and Vinya attended was called "The Korolenko Workers' School," after the Ukrainian writer.

Going to the new school in Chernigov was to Vinya like going to a picnic every day. There were so many free

arguments and debates and discussions among the students themselves, and discussions with the teachers. No one wore uniforms, and the boys and girls were together without any fuss. No one ever bowed or offered special salutes to the teachers any more. Yet some of the students there had gone to the gymnasium in that very building before the Revolution, when it was a school for little rich girls only, and no Jews were allowed. Once in a while the older students would forget and automatically rise from their seats when a teacher entered the classroom as was their custom in the old school. The teacher would shake her head and quickly motion with her hands. "You needn't rise—please don't, any more."

"Still using rusty old formalities," some student would remark derisively. "Maybe you come from a titled family?"

And there would be other remarks as well. "You are in a proletarian country now."

"Mind your knowledge and not manners." And then the teacher would make the class come to order.

Many changes kept taking place in the school. New teachers kept coming and going and there was confusion. What mattered to Vinya most of all was that she wasn't ever frightened. There was no teacher's whip and no humiliation of staying after school. Vinya shuddered at the memory of the old school in the village. There she had been stiff with fear of the teacher, and at home when Father had tried to help her, she had felt hopeless and cried, unable to think at all. It seemed like a nightmare.

Now, in the new school, Vinya felt free and glad to study. She liked all her subjects and delighted in the Ukrainian course. The handsome young teacher had a singsong voice, as he read enchanting folk ballads in the soft accents of the Ukrainian language. The poetic language was so

inspiring that Vinya tried to write poems in Ukrainian herself. She was twelve now and school friends meant as much to her as school studies. She tried especially not to miss any student gatherings by the school gate or in an empty classroom, where the girls and the boys sat on top of the desks as well as on the chairs, and at the teacher's desk. The more exciting the conversation, the more argument, the more fun it was to take part in it. The topics of conversation were personal news of the revolutionary battles, rumors about new teachers and new social science courses, or discussion of love based on the Russian novels they were studying.

For a while Vinya hesitated to express herself. She would think beforehand how her phrases would sound and she feared that they wouldn't sound clear, or polished, and that someone, especially one of the boys, might give her a disapproving look. The boys generally had a more important way of speaking, but not always. There was Vinya's favorite, red-cheeked, blue-eyed Natashka, who never let any boy get the best of her in an argument. She could think quickly and speak just as she thought. And if a boy ever pulled her extra-long honey-colored braids, she'd pinch the boy's ear, smooth her braids out, and sit on them for protection. She was also strong enough to hit with a snowball as hard as any boy. Natashka was always jovial, and when Vinya walked home with her, the two girls laughed hilariously as they sauntered through the city streets, commenting mischievously on passers-by.

Vinya regarded Natashka as her closest friend, but the person she admired most in school was Misha, a boy of fourteen to whom she never said more than a hello. Misha had a wonderfully serious way of speaking in a commanding, deep voice, with a slight rumble. His face was shadowed

by enormously thick, black eyelashes. When Misha talked about music, and he often did, there was a most absorbing light in his eyes, and he'd whistle or hum expertly, to illustrate his musical idea. Vinya watched Misha with fascination and listened to everything he said or meant to say, but didn't dare speak to him. She dreamed of a day when she'd be bigger and smarter, and then perhaps Misha would notice her. But Vinya was not given to dreaming much, either in school where she was learning so much and so fast, or after school.

From school, Vinya always rushed home to prepare dinner in the landlady's kitchen. There were supplies of preserved and stored food, which the parents sent from the village, but if there was any shopping to do, Mulik would usually be the one to get most unexpected bargains. Although there was the money which Fanya gave them as well as Father, Mulik adored bargains. He invariably returned from the market with volumes of paper money in change, although at that time, to get anything under a hundred-ruble piece was a feat. The first thing he did on coming home was to spread the table with all the paper money, as if he were exhibiting an important collection.

"Stop fooling, Mulik," Vinya would warn him. "Remember when a breeze snatched a thousand rubles from under your fingers?"

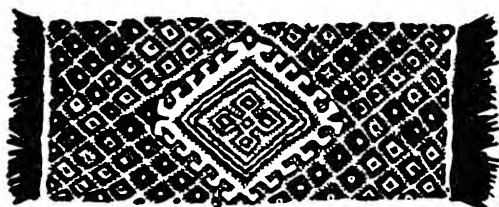
"Ha-ha," laughed Mulik, "but didn't I arrest the thief and get my money back?"

"Come on, come on, smarty! Help me peel some potatoes instead!"

Although the landlady occasionally cooked a soup or a stew for the children, Vinya usually managed the meals, for Fanya was busy with her important work. Often Fanya was so busy that she didn't eat at all, and home ties and

home relations seemed of no moment to her. Vinya and Mulik felt that their big sister had outgrown her family just as she had outgrown her small shoes. They, too, wished to be as independent. But they still missed home, in spite of their happy hours at the library and the park and the wonderful opera. Whenever they received a package with Mother's cakes, or a properly written, beautifully signed letter from Father, Vinya ached to go home. They talked again of the bad news Sonya brought them, and were puzzled and confused by it. How could Father abandon the home in the village? How could everything be moved to the city? They wondered about the twins and about Zelik.

But there had been so much change that now they had come to accept change as part of the new life.





14: Little Brother's Perilous Adventure

THREE years after the revolution, living was already advanced through education and health work and political propaganda, which told people that power and hope was theirs. The children believed completely that the equality and education that they were having and the co-operation with the new government would bring about the realization of the great promises—the promises of abundance and of wonderful scientific and cultural improvements, and an equal footing with the peoples of the world.

Yet, danger was lurking in many corners. There were counterrevolutionary bands or small armies everywhere. They sought to destroy what the new government created. These bands attacked towns that were politically active, that had improvements, that had a thriving Jewish population. Those who were against the revolution were against the freedom now given to Jews after centuries of persecution. Who were these small armies, these bandits as they were called, that sprang up so suddenly?

It was believed they were uneducated Russians hired by the monarchist generals who wanted to banish the new regime and the new freedoms. They wanted to restore the old monarchy, or at least the Kerenski regime, in which the former aristocracy would still rule.

One of the antirevolutionary bands descended riotously upon the now lively town of Repki one chilly autumn evening in the year 1920. These bandits instantly broke the newly installed telephone and telegraph, bound the town officials, shot several militiamen, and quickly and savagely proceeded to murder and pillage. They attacked almost every Jewish home, broke two-story windows by throwing children out of them; they grabbed valuables and slashed and stabbed and tortured people, with utter cruelty. Shots and shouts were deafening in the air.

At this very time, Zelik was playing with a hoop, rolling it first straight, then sideways, not far from the house. Although he did not see anything at first, he suddenly heard penetrating whistles and lashes and screams. He hung the hoop over his arm and ran fast to Babushka's house. When he came to the door, the commotion outside became so confusing and frightening that he dropped the hoop, pushed the door frantically with his body, and nearly fell in. Babushka picked him up, wailing, then went on with her

hurried task of tying up into a sleeve-bag her pearls, her watch on a gold chain, and two rings. And when Diedushka was not looking, she stuffed some money into it, too, which she took out of a hiding place. Diedushka was in a fume of fury, tearing at his hair, his beard, his shirttails. "They are killing us, but there is no war! There are no soldiers!"

"And who do you think is listening to you?" Babushka remarked acidly. Then she turned solicitously to panic-stricken Zelik: "You had better run away from here, dear, for something's going to happen."

"And will you come with me, Babushka?" Zelik asked.

"Oh, no, child, I'd get a coughing spell before I'd be ten steps away." And as usual, at the mention of coughing, she did get a spell, and gasping, she ordered Diedushka, "Get me the medicine, quick!"

But Diedushka was no longer subject to her power. A bandit was already in the house and had seized Diedushka by the collar in such a way that not even a hair of his beard was visible. Babushka's persisting cough proved a repellent, so when the bandit dropped the stiff, immobile Diedushka, he tried to grab Zelik next. But Zelik dodged and ran outside. The bandit darted after him, but near the stoop he stumbled on Zelik's hoop, and feeling a sudden shock on his knee, he stopped his pursuit while Zelik continued his flight.

It was not an easy escape, for another bandit started running after Zelik with long, menacing steps. In this race Zelik proved to be a practiced and determined runner, and his pursuer, tripping on the cobblestones, gave up. Zelik ran into a dark alley. There was a soothing sound of familiar voices there, and he soon saw three boys of his acquaintance, and joined them. The boys all huddled together and peeped and peered into the street. When they saw it was

clear, Zelik and two others ran out into the road in order to get out of town, while the fourth boy stayed behind, hoping to get home. Swiftly, silently the three boys ran, thinking they were safe from notice. But from somewhere, a bandit caught up with them and frightened one of them to a stop, but with a condescending gesture and a derisive laugh, he let Zelik and his other friend run on.

Frantic to get out of the dangerous town, the boys ran straight along the roughly paved road for a long while. When the town was behind them, and they could see only a few lights, they agreed to stop for a while, not to sleep but only to sit down on the ground and catch their breath. There were but a few dim stars in the sky, so that only the white road was visible, and on either side of it were space and darkness. Zelik and his friend walked briskly on. They walked for many hours without seeing any house or person. They knew they were going away from the town, but they knew not where. Soon they were in sight of what looked like a regular little village with whitewashed low cottages and tall, shadowy sunflowers. Feeling quite weary, the boys thought of stopping there, but they did not like to disturb strangers and the dogs, and they continued walking. It was still dark when they heard a clattering of wheels behind them, and they thought of getting a ride. But when they realized that the wagon was coming from the direction of the dreaded town, they hid in the ditch. There they stayed long enough to be sure that the suspected enemy in the wagon was a safe distance away, then almost fell asleep. But their anxiety to get away from danger and determination to get somewhere made them proceed with their journey.

By daybreak the boys found themselves at the outskirts of a big city, and by morning they were in its very center

—a strange, lively, exciting, and apparently safe and well-populated city. It happened to be Chernigov.

Meanwhile, Fanya, Vinya, and Mulik were utterly unaware of Repki's catastrophe and their brother's perilous adventure.

After several weeks of not hearing from Svinopuhi, they began to worry, not only about the safety of their family, their home, but about their dwindling supplies. There were very few things one could buy in the city markets, and what there was cost so much that Mulik couldn't cope with the arithmetic of it, in spite of all his love for numbers. Inflation was at its peak—so much money to carry, so little to buy with it.

"Perhaps if we went to the market in the morning we might recognize some peasant from our village," Mulik suggested.

"But do you think if anyone were coming to Chernigov from the village Father would know about it?" Vinya asked. No, they all agreed, that was not likely.

"It takes a long time for letters to reach us," Fanya explained. "They go through the post office in Repki, and mail doesn't go out of there regularly now."

"We might get word through someone from Repki of . . ." Vinya started saying, but was interrupted by an unfamiliar knock on the door. When she turned the latch, to the amazement of all three of them, there stood in the doorway a boy of about fifteen, whom none of the children knew, but whom Vinya thought she had seen somewhere. The strange boy was holding by the hand their own brother Zelik—very bedraggled, with mussed hair and dirty face and torn shoes, but unmistakably Zelik, grin and all. Everyone exchanged bewildered glances, then the strange boy spoke, addressing Vinya:

"Aren't you Vinya Gurvich?"

"Why, yes!" Vinya answered, still looking surprised.

"Well, isn't *he* your brother?"

"Of course!" she answered.

"That's what I thought when I saw him in the square, near the market," explained the boy, causing more confusion than ever. "I thought he looked just like you," added the boy, looking shyly at Vinya. "I see you often at the Korolenko School."

"But where did you get my little brother?" Vinya asked.

"He just seemed lost to me, so I thought I'd bring him to your house—I had an idea you lived in one of these houses, because I saw you coming in here a couple of times." Zelik, meanwhile, had slumped wearily onto the bed.

"He certainly must have got lost to get to Chernigov from Repki alone, on foot—a distance of twenty miles!" Fanya exclaimed.

"There was another little fellow with him," the boy explained. "But he looked so sick that I took him to the hospital near by." Then Fanya asked the boy to have tea and breakfast, but he had to leave, and everyone at once rushed to Zelik with a hundred questions.

"There was a bandit raid in Repki," Zelik told them. "Maybe the bandits were part of Kolchak's army. That's what somebody said."

"Did they kill people?" asked Vinya.

"Yes, all the Jewish people, I think."

"Did you see it happen?" Mulik asked.

Zelik nodded. "They were lying on the street, some without clothes and blood all over . . . Babushka was killed." Everybody gasped at that. Mulik began to cry, Fanya's face turned into a heavy cloud, and Vinya closed her eyes and shivered.

"Ba-bush-ka," she murmured, sobbing.

"Let Zelik rest while I wash him," said Fanya. "You get him some of your clean clothes, Mulik."

Comforted and fed, Zelik told more. "All four of the doctor's boys were killed. I saw them dropped out of the window when I was creeping by."

"Why do those bandits do such cruel, unspeakable things?" Vinya cried out.

"They've been taught to hate blindly, and to follow their counterrevolutionary leaders," Fanya answered slowly and with an effort at calmness. "They kill Jews because after the Revolution the Soviet government, for the first time in Russian history, gave equality to the Jews." They were all sad and quiet and thoughtful, while Zelik lay exhausted on the bed.

"How did you find your way to Chernigov?" Mulik asked.

"I didn't find it," Zelik answered.

"Well, you knew you were in Chernigov?"

"No."

"How did you run away?"

"I don't know. I was scared, and I ran along the road. But when I was chased I got off the road."

"How long did it take you?" Mulik asked.

"I don't know, maybe a day and a night . . ." Zelik mumbled in a dazed and sleepy way.

"Do let him sleep now," said Fanya, "and I'll go and try to find out what has happened in Repki, and how we can send a message home."

While Zelik slept, Mulik and Vinya worried and wondered what Father and Mother were doing and how they'd ever find out about Zelik being in Chernigov. They both

wished Father would move to the city even if he had to leave the house and belongings behind.

Fanya returned in the evening looking sadder than when she left, and saying little, except that she confirmed Zelik's report. Hundreds of Jewish people had been massacred and their homes had been raided. The Red Army had already driven all the bandits out of Repki, shot many of them, and even retrieved some of their loot. But communication with Repki or the near-by villages was still impossible.

"I hope the Red Army soldiers will shoot every bandit in the world and every counterrevolutionary," Mulik said. "As soon as I am big enough, I'll help the Red Army!"

Fanya looked at him ever so kindly.

"In a few years, you'll be old enough to join the Youth Club. Then you'll strengthen the Soviet power and help build up our Soviet Land." Mulik nodded earnestly.

Vinya was watching the sleeping little brother.

"He is certainly brave and strong to have kept on running," agreed Fanya. "I am glad he is sleeping off his fatigue and fear."

After a few days, when Zelik had recovered from the shock, the children began to feel natural about having him with them. Their biggest problem now was how to get in touch with the parents.

One morning the children heard familiar sounds, which came from the yard, sounds of creaking wagon wheels and the contented stomping of a horse about to be unharnessed and fed. All of them at once thought the same thing—someone had come from the village! The most agile, Mulik, at once leaped out of the window, jumped through the bushes, bounced across the garden path, and beheld dear, old, stout, pug-nosed Marya, uncovering some packages from under the hay in the wagon.

"Marya!" he cried, whirling around and dashing back to tell the good news to the others before they themselves could find out.

"What did she bring?" asked Zelik. "What did she bring?" Vinya suddenly looked at him with a puzzled expression and asked, "And how can we explain to Marya *your* being here?"

Fanya was about to consider that, when the door was heavily pushed in by a large crate, followed by perspiring Marya, shuffling in her bark sandals.

"Something from Matushka," she announced, with an expression promising delightful surprises. This expression, however, was suddenly cut off sharply by one of violent disbelief. "What am I seeing? Holy Mother . . ." she stammered, pointing to Zelik, and staring and withdrawing from him at the same time. "Why, his parents are mourning him—they are sure he was killed in Repki . . ."

All the children tried to tell her that Zelik had escaped alive, but Marya couldn't believe her eyes for quite a while. She touched and poked at Zelik, and turned him around by the ears, and shook her head. It was Zelik's bouncing and his digging the food package that finally convinced Marya of Zelik's return from the dead, as she called it.

No one lacked enthusiasm in opening the package from home. It was first agreed that the crate with all the straw and hay and wrappings should be taken to the kitchen and pantry where the provisions belonged, anyway, but it was impossible to postpone the pleasure for even the five minutes it would take to remove the crate. Anyway, it was very satisfying to take everything out in the intimacy of their own room. The crate showed Father's careful packing so nothing would be spilled or joggled improperly or squashed or broken; and nothing was. The food was all of

Mother's own preparation, which the children recognized by various familiar signs. The floor was soon littered with wrappings, and the room was like a market place. There was a jug of thick, white sour cream, a dish with a perfect ball of freshly made, yellow butter, wrapped in cabbage leaves, and a whole triangle of cheese inside the old linen bag in which it had been pressed with a stone. There was a basket with two ten-piece sections of eggs, large and perfect.

"We'll celebrate with some eggnogs!" exclaimed Fanya, who had joined in the gaiety of unpacking. This made the others feel happy and close to their big sister, and Mulik, who had lately taken up juggling, couldn't resist the challenge of throwing up two precious eggs and catching them safely, to the gasping amazement of everyone in the room. There was even a small pitcher of fresh milk, which Vinya immediately poured, and which they all drank as a toast to Zelik. Zelik paid little attention and drank what was left directly from the pitcher. There were two squatty and peaked, shiny, brown loaves of dark rye bread, so fresh from the home oven that the children all pressed their noses to smell them. There were fruit tarts, two apiece for three children, not for four, and a big bowl of dumplings filled with cheese, which Vinya decided to serve for supper with the sour cream.

There was a little linen bag with dry mushrooms, which had an enticing, spicy smell—these were for soup. The children kept unpacking and exclaiming and smelling and nibbling. They hadn't had anything nearly as good for over a month. There was a jar full of Mother's tasty little crunches of goose fat imbedded in brown onion curlicues; they all sampled those at once and licked their fingers. Now though there seemed to be nothing else to smell out of the crate,

there was something important still there. Zelik tumbled inside the crate to get it, and Mulik after him. The crate capsized, and out rolled Mulik in one direction, Zelik in another, and after them, at a much slower pace, rolled a huge golden pumpkin. Mulik instantly rolled up to it with ready teeth and nails, trying to sample its sweetness. Hur-ray! There would be sweet, baked pumpkin and their own roasted seeds!

When there was definitely nothing else to unpack, Marya remembered something. "Hold out your hands!" she ordered. The children cupped their hands in such a way as to get most capacity and least cracks, and came up to Marya with surprise and expectancy. She slowly rustled in the folds of her large skirt, till she found the slit of the ample pocket. "Wait a minute," she said, noticing the impatient attitude in the circle about her. She dug deep, making a dry, crackling sound. Her hand finally emerged full of freshly gathered hazel nuts, some still with their clinging, stiff, rough-edged leaves and cups. Zelik was first, but everyone else received the same amount.

When there was really nothing else to unpack and to taste, they were busy with putting everything away properly, and hiding some things to be sure they would last. The landlady was also happy, for besides her pay, she had received a live chicken from Father.

As Marya was anxious to do her own errands in the city and leave for the village, she asked Fanya to have ready a message to Father. Now the problem of what to do with Zelik came to their attention again. By the time Marya was to leave, everything must be decided. They all agreed that Zelik should go home to the village with Marya.

"But I am not going to school in Repki," Zelik said, a little worried, "even to the good new school."

When Fanya told Marya that she had Zelik all ready to go home with her, as well as a letter to Father, Marya was horrified:

"*Hospodi* (Lord Almighty)!" she exclaimed. "How can the boy walk into the house when his parents think he is dead! Something has to be arranged." This excited Mulik's fancy for inventiveness, and he suggested several ways of disguising Zelik, but none proved practical or convincing. Vinya suggested that Marya should go into the house by herself and tell Mother and Father about Zelik first, or show them the letter. Fanya thought there was no way of avoiding the shock completely, and since it was a pleasant shock, no use in bothering. Marya, however, had a scheme of her own. She decided to cover Zelik up with hay, on the bottom of the wagon, as soon as she drove into the village, since there was a good chance of meeting Father. When she came to the house, she would go in by herself and explain everything first, and then show them their son.

Zelik seated himself comfortably on a soft, pungent pile of hay on the wagon, and started whistling in anticipation of the long, happy ride home.

With the steady pull of the rhythmic rocking of the wagon, Zelik's body joggled softly in the hay and he fell asleep, still whistling lightly through his open mouth. Every now and then Marya let go of the reins and glanced at Zelik affectionately, and shook her head in dismay. She scratched her head and wrinkled her forehead, trying to imagine the reaction of the boy's parents.

"Get along, you cloppity thing!" she yelled, jerking the reins. The horse, feeling his mistress's determination, increased his pace till he ran as fast as she wanted him.

They were almost in the village Svinopuhi now. Zelik was awakened by the fast ride and sat up staring with

excitement at the familiar landmarks. Suddenly, he recognized Father walking toward them at a distance—the lean figure, the mustache, that certain, neat stride in the slightly pointed boots. Marya also noticed him and quickly motioned Zelik to hide in the hay. But Father was already close enough to see Marya and notice her frantic gesture, and Marya realized there would be no more waiting. As soon as she approached Father, she quickly told him all and made herself smile, though she wanted to cry. Zelik looked abashed and Father hugged him quietly and asked Marya to hurry home.

The twins were playing by the low gate, and when they saw Father and Zelik emerge from the wagon, they knocked on the gate and called loudly, “Zelichek, Zelichek! Papochka, Papochka!”

Hearing the commotion, Mother opened the vestibule door. She had a milk pitcher in her hand, which she was taking to the cellar to cool, and when she saw Zelik, she turned pale, trembled, and dropped the pitcher. The milk poured freely on the ground, delighting the twins, who promptly stepped into it.

Zelik looked at Mother and beginning to cry, he ran into her outstretched arms.





15: Civil War Continued

MOTHER and Father had had such a fright about losing Zelik that they decided now to move the whole family to the city where it was safer, for bandits attacked only un-

protected villages or small towns with isolated Jewish families. But moving to the city with a store, with crops, with all the family possessions and attachments, and the twin babies could not be done in haste. Besides, Father was a meticulous, systematic man. He wouldn't even write an ordinary letter without spacing it correctly, affixing the signature with due effect, and then folding and sealing the letter with care—never in haste. When he cleaned and candled and rolled in hay and counted and packed a crate of eggs, it was a job of assured perfection. With such a disposition, Father required a plan to move to the city, and Mother with her caution and thoroughness was in accord with Father. They planned the moving from the village to be accomplished within a year.

There were sentimental obstacles to the task, also. They had been married in that village at the age of seventeen, and had lived in a poor little straw-roofed cottage. They had worked hard here and had built one of the most substantial houses in the village, had raised a family, and kept hoping for better times and greater opportunities for the children. But the moving had to begin, the family had to be uprooted.

Father managed to purchase an old house with a garden on the outskirts of Chernigov, and he arranged to have Uncle move in there at once, with his wife and two grown children. Father and Mother would not go to Chernigov as refugees. They would not abandon their provisions in the bags and barrels in the cellar and pantry. No, when they left the village, they would take all the supplies they could with them, for well they knew that it was hard to get anything in the city. Civil war was still on, and there was news of a famine in the northern region, besides. They would stay in the village a while longer to gather things together

and to pack so that the family would be properly provided for in the city. Zelik would stay with them.

The few Jewish families in the villages near Svinopuhi had already moved with all their children to Chernigov, fearing to take the time to find proper housing or to make a satisfactory disposal of their old homes; they had simply fled, in refugee fashion. Friends and relatives urged Father to do likewise. He and Mother admitted the existing danger, but Svinopuhi was different, Father argued. He had lived there all his life, he had established trade and friendly relations with all the peasants. He and Mother knew every family there and felt perfectly safe among them and could depend on their protection, certainly for a while, till leave-taking could be arranged with prudence. However, since there was danger, Father decided to take the three-year-old twins to the city, and Fanya and Vinya moved with them to the city house where Uncle lived.

After school was out, Mulik insisted on being together with Zelik in Svinopuhi, so he rode home with Mother and Father. Mulik and Zelik fell at once to playing together. They sorted their collections of pictures and stones and birds' eggs. They explored the pond, the meadows, the trees, the barns for more collections and experiments and experiences. They were warned, however, not to go far from home.

Merchants and peasants came to the house frequently, and Father discussed with them business about cattle and crops and harvests—what was food, and what was feed, and what was seed. Father talked of weights and measures and figures. Frequently, he reached out for the worn and stained abacus, and click-clacked, shoving rapidly the small bead-wheels on their wire lines. On some days Father left the house on short trips. Mother was at home all

the time, folding the linen in chests, packing barrels of holiday china and glass and everyday crockery, airing holiday clothes, looking over and admiring the necklaces and old gold watches, and rings with bright stones. Together Mother and Father attended to the inventory of provisions in the cellar, jars of preserves and jellies, tubs with pickled fruits of which Mother was especially proud. They looked over the supplies in the pantry, the conserved fats essential in a household, bottles of locally pressed oil from sunflower seeds, and chains of mushrooms, which had dried outside the windows. There were bags of recently harvested potatoes, bins with dry corn and dry peas. There were barrels with different kinds of flour and pickled cucumbers of different sizes, a barrel with kraut. Plans were made for everything to go to the city, for the family to live on, in the new home. Mulik and Zelik could not actually help with such careful and grown-up work; they only looked on, and went out to play in the garden.

"Get some good ears of corn for supper," Mother called out of the window to them one day. The boys set to work tapping and rubbing the hard swellings in the tall, growing corn. They stopped now and then for a game of shooting hollow grass stems, then hunted for some more ripe ears, and stopped again for a contest of pebble-throwing. It was a long, hot, late-summer afternoon, and they felt no hurry to get through with the task, and they stayed on in the cool green corn.

Fanya and Vinya and the twins were in the city waiting for the family's arrival and busy on their own. Vinya was taking care of the twins and playing with them in the garden, finding them in the cabbage patch and behind the gooseberry and currant bushes. She took part in Uncle's and Aunt's household, getting used to the older cousins.

Vinya was most anxious about Fanya now. Fanya looked worried at meals and rushed off silently to work in the kindergarten, and to meetings in the evening. She seldom read in the hammock under the pear tree. The reason for her worry was the enemy army near Chernigov. It meant that Fanya together with all the other Youth Club members were preparing for evacuation of the government offices. There was a dreadful urgency about the word evacuation, and a sense of coming disaster. One evening at supper, Fanya said she would not come home at all that night, because all the documents and records of the Youth Club office had to be packed and hidden that night—Denikin was at the gates of the city. Vinya was eager to be of help.

"I could pack papers in boxes and carry them, couldn't I?" she insisted.

"No, you are too young to stay up late at night to work," Fanya answered protectively. "You are only thirteen. See, if the enemy army breaks into the city at night and raids the office, it would certainly be dangerous. Only responsible Youth Club members can undertake such work. I am glad you are willing, Vinya, but I insist that you stay home."

Vinya busied herself with the twins' bedtime, anxious about Fanya's dangerous work, anxious about the safety of the family. Although she wanted to be with Fanya and be grown enough to be a Youth Club member, she didn't think about it very long. She was big enough to have charge of the twins; she dressed them and fed them, guarded them and punished them. They were the youngest in the family, and she was helping Mother; she was big enough to take care of them, almost like Mother herself. Vinya felt a special strength in holding on to the family and in waiting for their home to be re-established. She thought of the parents and the boys in their familiar old home in the village, and

felt lonesome and longed for them. And again she thought anxiously about Fanya.

Fanya came home in the morning, and was jubilant! The danger had passed! The enemy had retreated from the outskirts of Chernigov.

"And no more need of evacuation, thank goodness!" Vinya exclaimed.

"No more," answered Fanya. "Now we have to work extra, digging out, untying, unpacking, and replacing all those documents we cleared out."

"Oh," Vinya groaned.

"We have done it that many times this year," Fanya stated, pointing three slender fingers. "This is civil war, my dear."

A certain peacefulness was felt in the city of Chernigov now, after the days of rushing and tension, after the sickly silent preparedness for evacuation. The river Desna was full of merry boating excursions during the day, and lively crowds of theatergoers filled the squares during the intermissions in the evenings. Fanya was in good spirits and talkative at home. The last day in July she had a free day. She wandered in the garden, sang with the twins, and read poetry in the shade of the pear tree. Vinya was absorbed in reading a novel by Turgenev, while the twins were baking mud pies in the sun. The only sound in the house was Cousin Maryusya's humming to the accompaniment of housework.

When the gate squeaked slowly, Vinya put her book down. That must be Aunt returning from her marketing, she thought. She waited till she heard the gate slowly close again and resumed her reading. It was Fanya who put her book down this time, and jumped off the hammock.

"I heard someone entering our gate," she said.

Then they heard soft barefoot steps approaching the garden, and Vinya turned her head. The twins' faces lighted up.

"Mulichek, Zelichek!" they cried in chorus. Vinya's heart leaped with joy at the familiar shapes of the small brothers, but the next second she felt dizzy with a sense of horror. The expression on the boys' faces and in their bodies told of some indescribable tragedy. Fanya looked at them, tears welling in her eyes, and she did not dare ask any questions. Fanya and Vinya both sensed that something utterly unforeseen and utterly cruel had befallen.

The boys were ghostly pale and speechless.

"You are bad," Baska cried, threatening to throw a handful of sand on the boys. "Go away!" And both twins ran down the garden path to the gate, calling, "Mama, Mama! Where are Mama and Papa?"

A pained and strained expression came into Mulik's face, as he said brusquely: "Bandits came to our house and killed Mother and Father."

"Oh, no—you are not dead or harmed!" cried Vinya, touching Mulik's shoulders. "You are all right; then they must be, too."

"We were playing in the cornfield, and the bandits couldn't find us," Zelik added. But Vinya wouldn't believe it—oh, perhaps the boys had had a terrible nightmare!

"But who brought you to the city?" she gasped.

"We have walked most of the way—since early this morning," Mulik said.

Then it was true! Sobbing, they stood close together around Fanya, too stunned to do or say anything. They saw in their minds the whole horrible picture of their parents' death. Only the twins could not understand, and

bewildered, they went back to their mud pies. Soon Uncle, Aunt, and Cousin Maryusya came in, and Aunt comforted the boys and put them to bed.

Vinya kept thinking that Mother and Father would surely be home in a little while. She listened intently for the creaking of the wagon in which they were coming; she listened for that bugle sound of Father's blowing his nose on arrival. She thought she surely heard Mother's voice. She wouldn't let go of her belief that Mother and Father were still alive. Fanya stayed closely by the twins and the boys, making herself cheerful for them.

Uncle took all practical, family matters into his hands now. He informed and consulted relatives and made plans to go to the village to attend to a proper burial of Mother and Father. He thought that certainly Fanya and Vinya and perhaps Mulik must go for a last look at the parents' bodies. Several relatives, whom the children knew only slightly, were going, also. All the children felt something dark and unreal and unnecessary about it, but it was no time to say things. Before they knew it, Mulik and Vinya were seated in the wagon together with some relatives going on the trip. But Fanya motioned to them to get off.

"No," she said thoughtfully to Uncle. "There is no need for the children or me to see the burial." Uncle and the other relatives were horrified.

"Is that your last expression of love for your parents?" asked an aunt.

"Have you no respect for elders, to comply with their request?" Uncle asked.

"But, Uncle, I couldn't express my love by watching mutilated bodies," Fanya replied. "You are going to attend to everything about the burial anyway, so there is no need for us to go."

"You feel no grief," Uncle said accusingly.

"You are wrong," Fanya answered. "But I don't care to show it or to go to get more grief than I already have."

"But if the other children want to go, you shouldn't stop them," Aunt said.

"No," protested Fanya firmly, "I should stop them. It will only be a horrible experience and a horrible memory for them. I will not let them go. It is my duty to protect them now." And the children did not go to Svinopuhi.

Uncle brought back from the village some supplies, provisions, a few furnishings, and even a few valuables, which the bandits had overlooked. Now the settlement of the family had to be made—six children from four to seventeen, and a house with a garden. In times of peace and set ways of living, the interested Uncle would have taken charge of everything. But this was a time of revolution and of building a New Social Order, so Youth had a special voice in everything. Fanya was, therefore, the main judge in the matter, and her ideas were definite.

"You are now the owner of this house," Uncle announced to her. "Do you want to sell it? It might be possible, in spite of restrictions. Or do you want to keep it for yourself?"

"I don't want to do either, Uncle. I do not need a whole house for my living or for the children's. You are living in it with your family—let it be yours, then. It certainly is of no interest to me to be *selling* a house. I don't need private capital either for the children's or my welfare."

"But where are the children going to live? How are they going to be provided for?" Uncle asked anxiously. "Wouldn't it be better if you left things to me?"

"No, Uncle. Although you have brought up ten children in olden days, you wouldn't have the right ideas of bring-

ing up young children now," Fanya stated frankly, and added with confidence, "The government will provide for the children, of course. The twins and the boys can live in one of the new Children's Homes."

"An orphanage!" cried Aunt. "What would your poor father have said!" and bitter weeping distorted her face.

"No, Aunt," corrected Fanya, "not a jaillike, gloomy orphanage, but a very different new Soviet Children's Home! Really, Auntie, it isn't as bad as you think."

"Where is it—where is it?" Zelik asked excitedly. The warm interest, the promise in Fanya's talk took away some of the tragedy that he still felt. Mulik listened with understanding and admiration to his big sister.

"Hear that, my little girls!" he called to the twins. "We are going to live together in a nice, big Children's Home, and I'll see that you don't get into mischief."

"But you can't find us," answered Neska, as both of them ran to hide behind the door. They soon came out and Baska said, crying, "We don't want to go away again!"

Vinya ran over to comfort the twins, and comforting them, she felt all afresh the tragedy of the parents' death, of the crushed home life that would never be revived. When the twins tugged at her, Vinya hugged the small girls, feeling their babyishness, feeling their loss of the parents, and feeling desperately her own helplessness.

It was hard to have a middle position such as Vinya had. She wasn't small enough to be protected and more or less managed by Fanya, as the younger children were. She looked up so much to her older sister that she wished she were young enough to be taken care of by her. Or, if she were older, she would be equal with Fanya; she would be strong enough to make decisions herself, and her opinions would count.

With Fanya's talk about the Children's Home, something new came into Vinya's consciousness, a conviction that the family *would* survive. The loss of parents, the loss of the house where they were all born, and even the separation that was to take place could not destroy this feeling of family and home.

Fanya's remarks about the Children's Home made Vinya feel something big and hopeful about it, and she wished she, too, were going to the new home and live with the children there. But it was decided that Vinya should finish the secondary school while living with Uncle, and in two more years, at fifteen, be ready for the university.





16: A Children's Home

CHILDREN'S Home Number Sixteen was located on the outskirts of Chernigov. It was a large, rambling two-story house and some cottages, surrounded by lawns and a garden

and an orchard. Before the Revolution it had been a private estate for a small, wealthy family with servants. Now it was a real home for some sixty children who had lost their parents, the youngest of them the four-year-old twins and the oldest a fifteen-year-old girl who was the president of the children's government. Grisha, a quiet-mannered man in his thirties, a member of the Communist party, was the only grownup in charge. He lived with his wife in one of the cottages and was the only teacher and counselor. There was one cook and one seamstress-laundress in the place; all the rest of the work was done by the children through well-organized committees. Food, clothing, and everything else were supplied by the government on a rationed basis.

"They may not always get enough, but they'll get the best there is, living in a Children's Home," Fanya explained. "And how are the twins?" she asked Vinya, who had just returned from the Home two weeks later.

"Wonderful!" replied Vinya. "They seem to have grown up so in the two weeks. They are members of the cleaning committee, and they know exactly what it means and have such pride in it! They showed me where brushes and rags were kept, and even showed me their names on a list posted in the dining room."

"And did you see how the other children work in their committees?" Fanya asked.

"Yes, I saw the provision committee unloading supplies and placing them neatly in the storage. I watched Zelik especially—he didn't know I was there. I was amazed how responsible he acted! Remember what a trouble he used to be?"

"Ah, yes," answered Fanya smiling. "I don't think he

was really bad—just a child worrying his family. Remember how he always drew horses? He had no idea how we older ones were bored by it.”

“He didn’t, that’s true. He didn’t see that he was bad.” Vinya was talking eagerly about home. “And his mischief always ended in something funny. One time when he ate up a bowlful of jam, Mother was so furious she whacked him on the head with the sticky wooden jam spoon. Oh, he looked so silly! Then I had to hold him while Mother *tried* to wash his hair!” Fanya and Vinya laughed heartily.

“It was wonderful at home when Father and Mother were there,” Vinya went on. “You may not feel it, Fanya—you were never at home much.”

“Yes, I do,” Fanya answered quickly. “Our home was wonderful.” And a tremendous wave of satisfaction spread over Vinya. At last her big sister shared her thoughts, at last they felt a common ground and were talking on equal terms. This gave Vinya courage to go on talking. She asked, “Why are all those children so responsible and industrious in the children’s home? In a family they would just be having fun.”

“They are responsible, because they make their own regulations,” Fanya answered, “and they have to do so because that is the spirit of the Soviet Children’s Home in these times. Children really rule.”

“But don’t they make blunders?” Vinya questioned.

“I should imagine so! Who doesn’t? If you want to get an idea what little children know about good citizenship go there on a Wednesday when they hold court.”

“I will!” Vinya answered. “I’ll skip some of my classes and spend the whole afternoon Wednesday at the Home.”

Vinya had chorus rehearsals Wednesday afternoons. This was by far the most enjoyable extracurricular activity, and

usually she would not miss it for anything in the world, especially since Misha had joined the basses and was so placed behind her that she could distinguish his voice from the others. But Vinya was so interested in the Children's Home now, so eager to see how the children really managed their busy life, that she made up her mind to give up the chorus for once.

On the way to the home she started thinking about the twins for a while, and felt a little sad that they didn't need her now. As she came closer to the Home, she became more and more anxious to see her brothers and sisters. The last city block Vinya ran. It seemed unusually quiet when she approached the house, and when she came in there were only a few children in the linen room, folding clean sheets. They greeted her familiarly.

"We decided to have a special harvest day to get all the carrots in," said Yasha, a twelve-year-old boy. "The twins are working, too. The laundry committee had to stop to bring the clothes in because of threatening rain."

"Well," Vinya sighed with relief, "I was afraid something was wrong—the place seemed so quiet," and she ran out of the back door, and followed the path to the garden.

The garden was full of children bending, digging industriously, carrying baskets, pulling bags. There was jumping and leaping instead of walking, jolly talk and laughter and singing.

"Hi, Vinya!" called Zelik, stopping work and swinging a shovel in his hands. "This is a special harvesting day," he said. "But I've been working in the garden for a whole month," he added proudly. "And we've raised enough carrots and potatoes to last us three months."

Vinya marveled at her little brother's talk. "Let me see your hands," she asked skeptically.

"Here," said Zelik, pointing to his blisters with a show of vanity.

Just then Vinya heard a young child's voice calling, "Neskas!" and she looked in the direction of the voice.

"Oh," Zelik explained. "That's Mishka. He's five—a half year older than the twins—and very fond of them. But he can't tell them apart, so he calls them both by the same name in the plural. To him, they are just two of the same thing."

Vinya laughed at this. "I remember how I had to practically undress both of them to make sure which was which by the little birthmark on Neska's stomach. Does Mulik take special care of the twins the way he intended to?"

"Yes," Zelik answered, "but we had such a stormy meeting about it, because almost everybody else wanted to have special charge of the three youngest children. Finally, Grisha had to explain that it was best for the youngsters to have the fewest people have charge of them, so now two of the older girls and Mulik take turns." Vinya felt a little unhappy that she was left out of this wonderful sharing, and group life, but then she caught sight of the twins running toward her, and she spread out her arms. They both talked at once, telling her how they raised their hands "to have the floor" in meetings, and how they changed their committees. Mulik quickly learned of Vinya's visit and came up the path:

"Stay where you are, Neska and Baska," Mulik called. "Catch now!" The little girls cupped their hands and watched intently for the catch. Zoom—came two carrots thrown simultaneously with two hands! The twins caught them, then threw them into the basket near by.

"We had some to eat already," Neska said.

"We don't waste any food," Baska added, and looked from Vinya to Mulik.

"Have supper with us," Mulik invited, "then you can attend court. It's exciting sometimes."

"That's just why I came," Vinya replied.

The twins each took her by the hand, and showed her proudly the harvesting children and all the baskets of carrots carried into the cellar. Grisha, the director, was in the garden, too, pipe in his mouth and taking an easy stroll. The children were always very comfortable with him, never feeling that he was in their way.

After supper Vinya went with a group of children into the social hall where court was being held. Yasha was in charge that evening. He read a complaint:

"Shura, on the dining room committee, keeps forgetting to put the broom in the right place and it gets in the way of children all the time." Then he asked, "What's bad about that?"

Comments followed. "If a person carried dishes and tripped over the broom, the dishes would break."

"If anyone got hurt falling over it, he might not be able to work."

"It looks untidy," a girl added.

"Well, Shura," said the chairman Yasha, "what do you think of all those damages that the children mentioned?"

"I don't want any damages in our home," Shura answered.

"And how about people getting hurt?" Yasha asked.

"I don't want that to happen," Shura answered. "We shouldn't have many accidents—we are short of medicines. I know because I was on the medical committee last month." Instead of being worried, Shura looked quite sure of himself. The children watched him as he sat on the platform.

"Tovarishi," said Yasha, "do you want to give him a punishment or let him take care of himself? All in favor of



having Shura take care of himself, raise your hand!" A great majority of the children, and Grisha, raised their hands.

The next child who went up on the platform was Zelik. Vinya nudged Mulik worriedly, but Mulik only shrugged his shoulders impersonally, as much as to say, "You'll find out what he did. He'll be all right."

Yasha looked into a notebook and made another announcement:

"The recreation committee reports that Zelik used up fifty pieces of drawing paper in one afternoon, and only half of them were used on both sides. We only have a few hundred sheets to last us a month."

"Whew!" said a little boy. "Fifty! That's wasteful."

"If they are only throw-away drawings, he should use both sides of the paper," said a little girl.

Then a boy of twelve got up to speak. "Zelik is one of our best artists. He probably has to use more paper than others. He draws more, and he experiments more."

"But he shouldn't waste, just the same," insisted the little boy. "And others should get some, too." Then Yasha motioned to Zelik, to give his side.

"It's hard to remember the waste when you are drawing, and pictures don't come out right. I'll keep reminding myself to use two sides of the paper. I agree it is not fair for me to use up most of the paper and not leave enough for other artists."

A ten-year-old girl got up to speak. "Since Zelik seems especially interested in drawing, we should try to get him an extra supply of paper. We might requisition it."

"Yes, requisition," exclaimed some child delighting in the big word.

"Well, Mulik," said Yasha, "*you* are one of our artists,

and you know your brother's talent. Do you think we should provide him with extra paper?"

"Yes," Mulik agreed, "Zelik has been working very hard on his drawing lately, and his pictures are quite good. I think we should requisition extra paper for him."

"Yes, yes," echoed several children.

Zelik flushed very excitedly, and said, "Thank you!" to everybody, and got off the platform.

Vinya was overwhelmed to see the children express so much power and manage themselves so independently. And everybody has the same right, young and older alike, Vinya thought. Zelik must feel thrilled to be so appreciated. Mulik looked at Vinya as much as to say, "See, you didn't have to worry about Zelik getting into trouble."

When Vinya was leaving the home, Mulik reminded her, "Be sure to come to our play next week. We have finished making it up, and we are working on the acting. You should see how funny Zelik is!"

"I can't imagine Zelik acting in a play," remarked Vinya, thinking of Zelik as still a clumsy, absent-minded little fellow.

"Oh, he's changed—he's older now, too," said Mulik. "He is past ten."

"How perfectly well and happy our children are," Vinya thought on the way from the Children's Home. "It's true the food there is certainly very simple, and the clothing rough, but all of them are getting along all right. Yes, all four of the children—Mulik, Zelik, Neska, and Baska—are getting along all right, without their parents. What would Mother and Father say if they came back to life and saw their children?" The thought haunted Vinya till she felt she had to talk about it to Fanya.

"Of course, neither Father nor Mother would like to see

their own children brought up away from the family," Fanya mused. "They would probably ridicule the children's inexperienced management. It would no doubt be hard for them to accept the new children's life . . ."

"But don't you think," Vinya interrupted, "if they had lived, they would learn to look at things beyond their own family?"

"Likely," Fanya answered, rather dismissingly, and looked thoughtful a moment. "The thing is that now we have thousands and thousands of children in the Soviet Union who are homeless, and we must give them protection and responsibility, so they can grow strong and useful. The Children's Homes are terribly important to us. Yes, perhaps more important than private families."

"But surely Father's and Mother's hard work to keep a family wasn't useless!" Vinya said.

"Of course, it wasn't," Fanya answered. "They did the very best for their time. And the good care they gave all of us children when we were little is showing now."

"That's what I think," Vinya joined. "I wish they were living now, and Father were managing a big government co-operative."

"He'd be good!" agreed Fanya. "And what would Mother be doing, then?"

"I know," Vinya hastened. "She'd be a cook for your nursery school! And everybody would help with the housework at home. . . . Oh, Mother's cooking . . ." Vinya went on dreamily till Fanya warned her not to be so sentimental. That had an effect. She wanted to grow up soon, to finish school and be as active and useful to her country as Fanya was and her brothers were going to be.



17: The Children's Theater

THE following week Fanya and Vinya both came to the Children's Home to see the play. It was shortly after supper, and most of the children were in the large social room full of cheerful noises and motion. In one corner a group of children were trying on costumes, fixing up sackcloth, tying on beards, and laughing. Zelik was among them. Mulik was busy with curtain and the stage. The twins were dancing in a circle while playing "the cat and the mouse."

"Fanechka, Vinechka," they chanted, seeing their big sisters enter, and ducking under the chain of hands, they ran to greet them. Fanya gave them each a small picture book, which the twins grabbed and clasped with glee. Then each of the twins took an older sister by the hand and showed them off to the other children.

"See our sisters!" They spied Grisha in the adjoining room by the museum cases. "Here are our sisters!" Neska called. Grisha shook hands with the girls and they joined him in looking at the long shelves filled meticulously with rocks in one section, pinned insects in another, pressed leaves and flowers in a third, and a colorful collection of birds' eggs in a glassed case by itself, with a number by each egg.

"This is Mulik's collection!" Vinya exclaimed. "There are forty-eight eggs now, and the names of the birds for each one."

"Oh, yes," remarked Grisha, "our museum is the finest thing the children did. They've collected and classified everything themselves. Mulik's collection is the biggest piece of independent work."

"I think science will be Mulik's lifework," Fanya said to Grisha. But Grisha shrugged his shoulders and tilted his head questioningly. He put both his hands in his pockets and stood thinking a while.

"Maybe . . . Maybe . . . But he is certainly absorbed in the theater now. Composition, production, marvelous acting—all the children are mad about his dramatics. You saw him last month, Fanya . . ." Just then Baska appeared from somewhere with a little bell.

"Get ready for the show!" she called. "The show!"

"The show!" echoed Neska.

"Well," Grisha said to Fanya, "we'll talk later."

There was considerable hustling and hurrying and scraping and clatter as chairs and benches were pushed and dragged for the audience consisting of Home Children and a few outsiders. The first act was set in a rich home, and Mulik was a pompous scheming capitalist. His voice and posture were completely changed, and with his fat-man costume he was hardly recognizable. He was a very convincing villain. The twins kept nudging their older sisters, reminding them that it was really Mulik and he wasn't "really bad."

Zelik was a horse with another child in back of him, and both under one cover. Zelik did all sorts of funny tricks and pantomime, and the audience roared with laughter, and applauded for a repeat.

When the homemade, patched curtain was drawn after the first act, and the children were bursting with high approval, three important-looking men came into the room, exchanged a few words with Grisha, and remained in the audience for the rest of the performance.

The second act was about workers deciding to organize and rebel. Mulik was a revolutionary leader, full of care for the crowd of workers swarming on the stage, full of courage in planning a revolution. He was expressing the workers' demands very dramatically. The children in the audience were so absorbed and so moved by the performance that one child got on the stage and said to Mulik:

"I want to help you make the revolution, too!"

At the end of the second act, the strange visitors in the audience talked again with Grisha and with Fanya as well. The strangers were from the theater division of the education department, one of them an actor himself.

"We've been doing some talent scouting," said the actor. "And I think this Mulik of yours is the finest child actor in

the city of Chernigov. He is twelve years old, you say?" Grisha nodded. Vinya listened to him wide-eyed, for she felt the meaning of her brother's future was being decided now, to some extent.

"What very lively construction in the play!" said another man. "It never drags. How many children helped?"

"That is hard to answer," Grisha said. "Mulik does a good deal of the composition, but the other children's thoughts are in it. They all want to play making revolutions. You can see that every character makes up his own lines."

"Wonderful teamwork," remarked the third man. "What power children do have."

Grisha nodded simply. "In work and in art."

There was a movement of the curtain about to be opened.

The twins ran off the stage and each planted herself in an older sister's lap.

The third act began with a May Day singing parade. Most of the children from the audience, including the twins, got on the stage to join in the singing and the marching. Mulik did a leaping hopak dance in the parade. The most exciting scene in the third act, however, was Zelik's impersonation of a lazy-looking ignoramus who answered all the children's questions wrong and he didn't even know what "science" was. He said that "a Bolshevik" was a "big man"! The same ignoramus was also a terrible glutton. The children in the audience roared, laughing at him.

After the show, the three strange men again talked to Grisha and Fanya, repeating several times that Mulik was a genius, and should do great things in the theater.

"Will Grisha tell Mulik about being a 'genius'?" Vinya asked, as she and Fanya were walking home.

"I think not," Fanya answered. "He knows how much

encouragement Mulik gets from the children, and that he has plenty of confidence in his acting already."

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Vinya. "I will remind him when he is a grownup and an actor how he used to steal his way into the theater when he was a little boy." It was exciting to dream about the future, to imagine what her little brothers would be like as grown men. "And Zelik—he will be an artist, won't he? Where will he be sent to study?"

"I suppose to the Kiev Art Institute, if he is good enough to pass examinations," Fanya answered. "But can you imagine little brother a grown-up art student and artist?"

"No, I can't," laughed Vinya. "I wonder how good an artist he'll really be!"

"You can't tell now—especially since he might get interested in some other work," Fanya said thoughtfully.





18: A Street Adventure

SIX years had gone by since the October Revolution and the beginning of the new Soviet life. The talk and the tension of war and battles and bandits had subsided. Songs of the victorious Red Army became more confident, more emphatic. But revolution was still the most important thing in life to the children. Courage with action and faith in the

new life were the fare of the day—courage to suffer hardships and destruction that was caused by the civil war and the spreading famine.

The famine was practically as great a disaster as the war. Hardly any rain fell for two seasons in a large region in the Ukraine and Belorussia, and the drought killed the crops. Whatever crops had been stored from before were soon used up. Because the country was still poor from the world and the civil war, not enough food could be sent from other regions. After a while, people from the famine-stricken areas fled anywhere they could, wherever there was the least promise of food. The government tried to evacuate the children from the famine regions and take care of them in specially set-up homes.

The streets of Chernigov were swarming with famine refugees. They were lean and pale remnants of human beings who staggered weakly, stared and begged with outstretched, clawlike hands.

Fanya hardly ever came home now during the day, for she spent her days off and even her hours off working with a committee to provide for the famine children, who were placed in new Children's Homes. All Youth Club members volunteered to help with the famine children on days off; help with food, with clothing, with restoring health, and providing play and education.

As Vinya was walking from school one afternoon, she met not far from her house a gaunt, deathly pale woman with two small children clinging to her coarse garments. Vinya had never seen eyes in such deep sockets before, or face bones so sharply visible. Yet, for all the woman's skin and bones, she moved her feet with such an effort as if she weighed a ton.

"Have mercy, girlye," the woman mumbled, barely mov-

ing her colorless lips. One child whined in a weak, pitiable manner, and the other stared as if paralyzed, clutching his fist.

"Wait here a minute, Auntie," said Vinya in a firm tone, "I'll be right back!" She then dashed madly to her house, threw her books on the floor, and unhesitatingly attacked a fresh bread loaf with the big knife. Just then, her aunt entered.

"What are you doing, child?" she exclaimed. "This can't be for yourself!"

"No, Auntie, it's for a famine-stricken family."

"Beggars!" Aunt interrupted. "I've given to three of them today already! We can't feed them all. There will be nothing left for us—mark my word!" Vinya looked so downhearted that her aunt changed her tone. "Go ahead, this time . . ." She walked out of the room and Cousin Maryusya came in. She helped Vinya cut the bread, then wrapped some cheese and two apples with the bread.

"*We* are not starving yet," she whispered to Vinya, "but don't show this to my mother." Vinya dashed out with the food and found the weary family group as if they were rooted to the spot. At the sight of food, the three began to tremble and utter peculiar noises, and Vinya feared the excitement would be too much for them. She also wanted to get the children to a children's shelter where Fanya was working. That was at least a mile away. She looked around, thinking and avoiding the sight of the glaring, hungry people tearing at the bread. Then she heard the creaking sound of wheels on the cobblestone. Forgetting her timidity, she ran up to the old bearded driver and stopped the cloppetty horse.

"Be so kind, Grandpa. Take those starving children to the Children's Home." Vinya was so sure the driver would

take her that she helped the whole family into the wagon. She directed the driver and tried to say nice things to him to make up for his trouble.

They stopped at an old building bearing the sign Soviet Home for Famine Children. When they entered, Vinya at once found Fanya amidst all the lively young workers, and showed her charges.

"You did well," praised Fanya. The words were balm to excited Vinya.

"Your younger sister is probably as good a worker as you," remarked a young man who was a doctor's assistant. Vinya flushed. "And she looks like you, too, Fanya, except for the color of the eyes—really!" Vinya turned crimson from the sudden attention and felt inordinately proud. Fanya showed her the airy playroom for the older ones, and the infirmary with a doctor and young assistants.

"Will these starved children change to normal again?" Vinya asked.

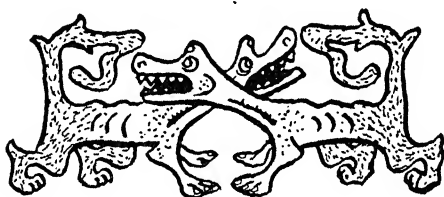
"Of course," Fanya answered optimistically. "We have special gradual diets for them and exercise. Most of them become lively in a few weeks."

"How long will you work here today?" Vinya asked.

"I have just come from the nursery school," Fanya answered. "I volunteered for the late afternoon shift, and have charge of a hundred children here. I'll be home before you go to bed." Vinya marveled at her sister's strength. Fanya responded with a cheery smile, "I am not working harder than the rest of the Youth Club." Then she added seriously, "And I want to do everything possible to make our children healthy." And Vinya understood how vastly more important this children's home was to Fanya than her own home, how large her feelings were.

Vinya finally trudged home, thinking of her shocking

encounter, and of the wonderful work of the Youth Club volunteers. She recalled all the stories of famine she had heard, of people eating grass and gnawing wood and devouring animals. She imagined the desperation of real hunger, not simple shortage of food and lack of variety. There were still big bowls of bean soup at home that Aunt prepared tastefully for supper, but there was no denial that food was scarce and Aunt's complaints were justifiable.





19:

The Great Offer

WHEN Vinya came home, full of gloomy thoughts of the famine, she found Aunt, Uncle, and Cousin Maryusya in a state of unusual excitement. Uncle was pacing the floor, and

stroking his beard thoughtfully; Aunt tried to talk but wept instead. Maryusya fluttered a foreign-stamped envelope in her hands, and looked up at Vinya with a happy shining face.

"A letter from America!" she said to Vinya. America, the marvelous, mysterious dream country, a country of fantastic improvements and fantastic luck for everybody—that's what everybody in Russia thought. Vinya knew that Uncle had four grown children there, and that he himself hoped someday to be reunited with them, and the letter told of that heavenly day. "Read it, read it!" said Maryusya, handing the letter over to Vinya. And Vinya read the letter from her American cousins, which was written in partly forgotten, partly Anglicized Russian language:

"We received yours telling us of the dangerous and unsettled conditions in Russia. We are very sorry to hear that you are having such a hard time." Vinya read aloud while Aunt listened and wept. Vinya continued with the letter. "We are deeply grieved over the orphaned children. Those poor children having to go to an orphanage! But all your troubles will soon be over. We are establishing ourselves in a little business here, and although we work very hard, we have scraped up enough money to provide a home for all of you." And then followed enumeration of the four members of Uncle's family and six children, not omitting the twins. Vinya swallowed and blinked, hearing the unexpected news, and finished the letter: "Let me know how soon you can start out and how much money you have yourself toward the trip."

"Isn't it magnificent! I can hardly believe it's true!" exclaimed Maryusya. Aunt could not stop weeping—from joy, of course. Uncle was agitated; he did not say much,

but he smoked and coughed and spat more than usual. When Cousin Nahum, a twenty-year-old young man, came home from his lumber factory job, he, too, was very much impressed with the news. He paced the floor vigorously, saying, "It's a great offer—it's a great offer, indeed."

Vinya was excited, and perplexed and anxious for Fanya's reaction. What would really happen? Could the whole family actually go to America, the country of miracles and of plenty? Would they go to a *strange* country? Would she leave school and opportunity to join the Youth Club? What *would* Fanya say?

When Fanya came home that evening and learned the exciting news, she was ready to answer all questions pertaining to the trip. Vinya was amazed at her sister's wisdom and definiteness.

"Of course, America is a wonderful country," she said, and added more thoughtfully, "and—we should make *our* country so, too. *I* must stay here."

"So the Soviet Union will not be wonderful without you, I suppose," remarked Nahum.

"I don't look at it that way," Fanya answered. "It stands to reason that the more loyal workers we have, the more co-operation, the sooner we'll have what we want."

"That's nice talk," offered Aunt, "but any of your Youth Club members would jump at a chance to go to America—they'd jump at it without once looking back, I tell you."

"What's the use of talking?" said Cousin Maryusya. "If Fanya's mind is so made up, she must surely know what she is talking about."

"Yes," asserted Fanya, "I know my work is urgent, and I will remain to do it." They looked at one another, feeling that there was nothing more to be said. Fanya assured Uncle that she had nothing against his family going to join the

American sons and daughters. "But the children, except the twins, must decide for themselves," she added.

"I am the legal guardian of the twins," explained Uncle, "and I will take them along. And as far as the boys are concerned—you are giving them a responsibility beyond their years." And he looked accusingly at Fanya. Fanya remained silent and thoughtful.

Then Aunt brought up the question, "Who will take care of the twins? After all, they are only five, and need attention. Why should Maryusya be burdened with them?"

"Never mind, Mama," replied Maryusya, who never refused work either asked or expected of her.

Fanya's recommendation was that the twins remain in the Children's Home where they were already adjusted.

"Adjusted!" exclaimed Uncle. "They must be practically starving there now, with this food scarcity. Just tell me, Vinya, what those children had for supper—you were there yesterday."

"They had bread with a little American Crisco on it, and an apple apiece." Vinya answered. "That's all they had."

"See," cried Uncle, "how can they be healthy with a diet like that, week after week?" Aunt shook her head vigorously, and everyone looked at Fanya.

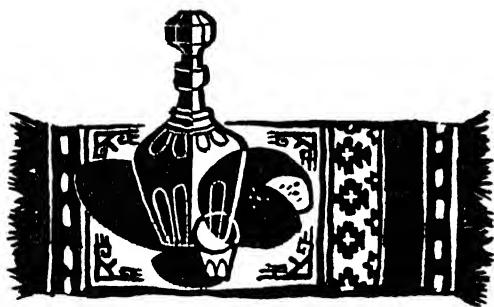
"I know food is scarce now, but conditions are improving. The children's homes are the first to get their allotment of anything that is available in the city. The children themselves know and understand that they'll get more and better food as soon as it's to be had."

"None of the children complained a bit about the meager supper—and there were all sorts of activities and singing just as usual," said Vinya.

"That's make-believe happiness! The twins should be

better cared for. I'll take them with me, and they'll thank me for it!" Uncle asserted. "Vinya can take care of them while they are small. She'll be a fool if she doesn't come along," Uncle argued. "She is a bright girl, and there might be a bright future for her in America."

"There might, little Vinya," said Cousin Nahum, pinching her cheeks. Fanya insisted that Vinya and Mulik and Zelik should decide for themselves, not be forced into a decision. Everyone except Fanya predicted that the boys would want to go, but she offered no opinion about them. Vinya, still perplexed and excited and entirely undecided herself, was the one to bring the news to the boys, to present the great offer to them.





20:

Leave-taking

VINYA felt excited and worried by the importance of the news she was carrying to her younger brothers. "It's true," Vinya thought, "that Mulik may be old enough to understand what a trip to America would mean. He has read many books about America. He is the kind of boy who takes things seriously, and knows how to make decisions. But Zelik—not yet twelve—how can he make a choice by himself? Perhaps they are both too little to decide for themselves—just as Uncle said." She continued worrying. "How can I make a choice? How? Something familiar and strong pulls me to stay here, and something unknown and attractive beckons me to go to America."

When Vinya came to the home, Zelik was the first one to greet her.

"What's new?" he asked casually.

"Lots of news!" Vinya answered.

"Well, what then?" he remarked, not thinking of anything serious. They were in the kitchen, where Zelik was finishing supper preparations. He was calmly piling pieces of plain black bread and setting the tea things, for tea and bread was all the supper they were having. "We are getting more food next week!" Zelik told her brightly.

"I really have news," said Vinya. "I'll tell it to you and Mulik at the same time. Call him." Zelik looked puzzled, and went with Vinya to a room where many children, including Mulik, were preparing flags and pictures and placards for the October Holiday parade. Some children were making gay paper decorations to frame a large new portrait of Lenin, which was hung in their social room. A little girl was sewing white letters on a red flag. "Children's Home No. 16"—this was to be at the head of the parade. Another child was perfecting a sharp drawing of a hammer and sickle, which was to go on a red flag for the parade. Mulik was bending over a table, printing in large, bold letters: "Long live the Union of Soviets—The Union of Workers!" This was also to be inscribed on a flag.

"And let me show you what I am making for the parade," Zelik said, showing Vinya a colorful portrait of the revolutionary Ukrainian poet Shevchenko.

"Isn't it good?" asked Mulik coming up to Vinya.

"Yes," she answered enthusiastically.

"We'll carry real flowers in the parade," added Mulik, "and we will sing together with ten other homes . . ."

"And don't forget the dancing," Zelik interrupted, giving Vinya an especially promising look.

"Stay for our chorus practice, Vinya," Mulik urged.

Now the important news about America wasn't worrying Vinya so much, and she decided to delay it till after the singing, but Zelik suddenly remembered.

"Did you really have some unusual news?" And he called to Mulik. "Vinya had some kind of news for us, she says!"

"It's this way . . ." Vinya began in an uncertain voice. "I'll tell you the main thing at once . . . Uncle's sons in America asked us all to come and live with them."

"To America? All of us?" Mulik asked in disbelief. "Who would provide for us?"

"Our cousins would provide for us till we grow up, I think," Vinya replied.

"They must be rich," Zelik said. "Maybe they are even capitalists," he added, frowning. "We don't have to go if we don't want to?"

"Well, Uncle and Fanya finally agreed that you are to decide for yourselves," Vinya explained.

"We are!" exclaimed Mulik opening his eyes wide, and squaring his shoulders to a level of importance. "Hurrah!" Then he added more thoughtfully. "I know Fanya won't leave. She would be a deserter if she left for her own pleasure."

"Yes, but she is eighteen," Vinya answered, "and she has important work to attend to. You don't."

"But we are growing up to do important work," Mulik replied quickly. "What do you think—we'll be creeping babies *all* the time?"

"We should have at least a week in which to decide," Zelik suggested.

"Yes," Mulik agreed, "and what about the twins? By right, Zelik and I should decide about them."

"No," Vinya told them, "Uncle has legal guardianship, and he chooses to take them with him to America."

"Really!" exclaimed both boys at once.

"And what will happen to you?" Mulik asked. "I suppose you have become used to Uncle's family and want to follow them."

"Uncle thinks I should go along to take care of the twins," Vinya said hesitantly.

"And do you want to go?" asked Zelik.

"I don't know yet," replied Vinya. "Uncle won't be going for two months, at least—so don't tell the twins anything. Fanya says there is no sense in disturbing them about a change, yet."

"I understand," agreed Mulik. "We'll have a lot to think about this week. But we'll each decide for ourselves, I promise."

"It would be fun to see what America is like," ventured Zelik, "see the skyscrapers and all the machines that work by themselves like magic."

"I would like to hear people speak English—it must sound very queer," said Mulik.

"It sounds impossible when the English teacher speaks it in my beginning English class," answered Vinya. "The mouth is just full of tongue and a sort of froggish croaking." They all laughed at that, and Mulik promptly gave his inimitable version of English—full of slushes and lisps and gurgles.

"And they have Negroes living in America," Mulik added. "Some of them used to be slaves like Uncle Tom!"

"I'd love to see Negro people!" exclaimed Vinya, who had wept many times over *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

"If Zelik and I stay here in the Soviet Union and you

go to the United States of America, you'll be sure to tell us about everything. Won't you?" Mulik said eagerly.

"Of course," answered Vinya emphatically, feeling that a turn in the decision had already been made. "But I wonder how we would have decided on such a move if Father and Mother were with us," she added reflectively.

"Oh," said Mulik, with a quick gleam in his eyes, at the remembrance of his parents. "We would all go then—all except Fanya."

"But how do you know the American cousins would ever have asked Mother and Father?" Zelik asked.

"I know what," answered Mulik, "they are probably just taking pity on us! And I don't like it. Would you like it, Vinya, if the American cousins were just taking pity on us?"

Vinya shrugged her shoulders. "I am sure they'll be nice," she said, "and I am so interested in seeing America."

It was an uneasy week for Vinya. At home there was anxious assortment and reassortment of all household goods, and argument as to what would be needed for the journey, and how to dispose of the feather beds. Cousin Maryusya was excited about the reunion with her American brothers and sisters, whom she believed to be very well off and very handsome, indeed. She was sure she'd have a secure life in America, and study, of course, and become a recognized singer.

Vinya felt strongly the excitement about going to a strange, faraway country. Could the rumors of its wonders be true? The next minute Vinya thought of the university and her chance to study for a lifework in another year—she would lose all that if she went to America. In America she would first have to learn the preposterously difficult English language from the very beginning, even the alpha-

bet, for she had not learned English in her course in school. Yes, instead of being a university student in the Soviet Union, she would be a deaf-mute-illiterate in America. That was dreadful. Why go, then? And hadn't Fanya and Mulik and even Zelik made it clear to her how much all workers were needed in the Soviet Union? To be needed and to be useful—these make you feel strong and happy! On the other hand, Uncle's family was expecting her to go along with them to help take care of the twins. They were counting on her. Could the little twins go alone? Vinya felt a strong attachment to them, now. She had rocked them and sung them to sleep when they were infants, had given up games and books when they were toddlers, and had watched them grow. Now she would take care of them and be with them as they grew up in America.

Trying to make up her mind in such a grown-up fashion, Vinya felt very lonely, and the thought of her leaving Fanya, perhaps forever, made her feel sad and lost, and finally she gave in to tears. She was mentally saying good-bye to everything, although she had actually not yet decided to go. Good-bye, Chernigov, with the park and river, the opera, and theaters! Good-bye, Shevchenko Street and their house, the hammock under the pear tree, and the currant bushes! Her sobbing went on. Fanya and Maryusya, who were talking and singing outside, heard Vinya and came to find out what was troubling her. Then it was agreed that Vinya should have an extra week in which to decide.

Meanwhile, Fanya and Vinya both went to the Children's Home to learn what the boys had decided. Fanya was very close to her younger sister just now and even neglected some of her work to be with Vinya. Before they saw the boys, Fanya had a talk with Grisha, the director, to find out what *he* might have told them about America.

"Yes," answered Grisha, "they have brought up several discussions about America, the industrial and social progress there, and we compared these with revolutionary progress in the Soviet Union. Neither Mulik nor Zelik asked for personal advice. They are clear-headed fellows. Zelik looked at me straight in the eye and asked, 'How would you like to go to America?'"

"Well, what *did* you answer?" Vinya asked eagerly, curiously.

"I answered that I'd be delighted to!" said Grisha easily. Vinya was puzzled, but the boys were already on the scene, and Grisha left the two brothers and the two sisters alone. Zelik had a bright and eager expression and came forth with a speech:

"I have decided not to leave the Home and all my friends. I want to grow up here and to help in the building of the new life. After all, we have lived through the worst part of the Revolution. Now the fighting is stopping, factories will soon be built, and we'll all have more of everything, and I shall enjoy life here. It would be foolish to go away after I have lived through the dangerous and suffering part." He stopped to look for recognition, then added matter-of-factly, "And I escaped death twice." Then he continued reflectively: "We'll have socialism here and all the people, all the workers, will be getting *more* and *more*. I want to see it!" There was earnestness and complete, happy faith in his voice.

"But aren't the American workers well off and advanced already?" asked Fanya. "You can be one of them when you grow up."

"In America there is capitalism, and the owners have a hundred times more riches than the workers. Some workers are miserable even in America."

"It's miserable here with starvation and famine," Fanya reminded, as if she were testing the boys.

"But the Soviet government isn't to blame for that," Mulik answered now.

"I think," Zelik stated with mature seriousness, "work here is more important than what I'd be doing in America. It is not just work for *myself*." No one said anything for a moment. "Anyway, I belong here," Zelik finished.

There was a glow of special recognition on Fanya's face as she listened to Zelik. She smiled and turned to Mulik. Vinya was restating in her mind Zelik's reasons, and she felt his decisiveness. She looked curiously at Mulik.

"My case is simple," said Mulik lightly. "I have so much interesting work and studying to do here in the Home. I am doing experiments in science, and I am getting along with dramatics. I don't want just to drop it all suddenly. And I don't feel right about leaving all my comrades."

"But there must be wonderful schools in America for studying anything you want," Vinya tried to argue, with a new sense of defending America now.

"I don't know about that—I mean I am not sure that I would have a chance. What if our cousins won't have enough money for our education? What if they have over-production or fail in their business? That can happen in private capitalist industry. What would happen to us, then? Here, I am sure the Soviet government will take care of all of us children, and we'll have a chance when we grow up." Then everyone remained thoughtful for a while. Vinya was considering Mulik's clear decision and beginning to wonder about herself.

Then Mulik burst in with a question. "What about you, Vinya? What about you? You know, it might be a good idea if some of us did go to America, since we have a

chance. I can't imagine what you'd be like as an American!" There was lightheartedness and curiosity in his voice now.

"It might be a good idea," Vinya answered. "But if I go to America, it will be my fourth life."

"What do you mean?" laughed Zelik. "You haven't been dead even once, not even almost dead, like myself."

"Well," Vinya began dreamily, "I lived at the time of the Czar, went to the awful school, and was cured by sheptuhas—that's one life; then when I was ten years old, I saw the Revolution break out with the quick new changes, and I suffered in the civil war—that's *quite* another life."

"Go on," said Fanya, as Vinya stopped to think, and Mulik and Zelik listened expectantly.

"Well, the third life, when I was thirteen, is the free Soviet school, the new theaters, and interest in plans of work to help The People, a getting-ready life—and now, when I am fifteen, comes America—a new life entirely, don't you imagine? That's my fourth life."

"It looks as though everything is decided then," Fanya summed up. "Vinya and the twins will go to the United States, and the boys and I will remain in the Soviet Union."

As usual, Fanya spoke briefly and to the point, but the expression, the feeling behind the words was neither brief nor spent with the uttered words. Her large, gray eyes reflected a profound sensitivity to the younger children. Her smile told them of unity with her, of joy in the relationship. Then a gripping sadness from apprehension of separation came into her face. Vinya turned aside, trying to stifle the flooding grief. Mulik promptly caught the feeling, with rushing tears. Zelik started talking loudly and rapidly about doing things on hand. Then Neska and Baska joined the family group, and Fanya hugged them and gave each one of them a ride on her shoulder.

"Sing us a song," begged Neska.

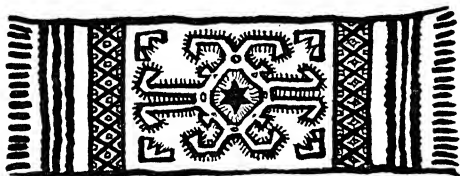
"Sing us a song," echoed Baska.

"And which one should it be?" Fanya replied warmly.

"A march, a march!" the twins cried together.

"Come with me now," said Mulik, taking the little girls by the hand and marching them as he sang in unison with Fanya. They sang the popular march about "evil winds still blowing—hard times are still ahead," and about confidence and promise of "raising the banner for a better world and a glorious freedom." There was swiftiness and contagion in the melody, and the twins came in, stamping and singing with the chorus.

"March, march ahead,
You people who work!"



Epilogue

FOR a few years Vinya and the twins lived with their Americanized relatives in a small Midwestern town in the United States. Life in the new country seemed at first very subdued to Vinya, mainly because she understood very little of the English speech and could hardly speak at all for many months. She marveled at the naturalness with which her American relatives spoke English, and at the speed with which the twins learned the new language. The twins' English vocabulary grew by the hour, and in a few months they could say whatever they wanted in English. They lost all trace of foreign accent and promptly forgot their native Russian. Vinya struggled on with the confusing complexities of the great new language, and continued thinking and speaking subconsciously in the familiar, secure, old Russian language. At the age of six the twins had responded and adjusted and Americanized automatically. Vinya, at sixteen, held deeper the roots of the old country, and gave herself only tentatively to the new.

The marvelous abundance of food and clothing, the speedy automobiles and clean, packaged goods were all here in America, as Vinya expected. The advanced standards, the machines, the independence, and freedom of the people were all true. There was the factory worker next door, who drove his own car. There was her American uncle who had saved money from six years of chicken farming and bought a store and was planning to buy real

estate from the store profits. And there was the washer-woman's son who often bought himself a big chocolate bar, and some penny candy sticks, besides. Yet, curiously enough, Vinya felt no final satisfaction from this abundance on the part of the people, no great joy. The factory worker with his own automobile talked gloomily about the doom of "layoff," referred to the "pay envelope" as the source and trouble of everything, and he cringed when the conversation turned to "bills." Uncle, who saved from the chicken farm, was preoccupied with "mortgages" and "payments" and fat ledgers, late into the night. The boy who bought chocolate bars also bragged uncomfortably about his comfortable living. Vinya felt these things without trying to explain or criticize. One thing definitely troubled her about the new country—there was no singing in the homes or in the streets or at gatherings, as there was in the Ukraine. She missed her native music more than anything else.

Vinya entered high school when her English was still so inadequate that she could hardly make herself understood. But how kind all the teachers were in giving her special instruction! The young pupils in the school were free-mannered and fun-loving, and they were thoroughly amused by Vinya's foreignness. Yet they helped her at every step—pointing out objects in the school, explaining patiently and repeatedly the meanings of new words. Their attitude was friendly and accepting. Vinya began to feel a merging with the people, with the American living, and she became aware of the striving and the promise of schooling in the new country.

The correspondence between Fanya and Vinya became less frequent, yet Vinya's feeling for the family and her hope of a reunion was always kept alive. Fanya had mar-

ried, and in her last letter she described happily her attending the university in Kharkov together with her husband, her absorption in the studies, and her hope of having a baby. Fanya wrote ardently, almost nobly, of the achievements of the Soviet five-year plan.

Vinya thought with deep satisfaction: "So they are really making economic and cultural strides in the Soviet Union! The promises are being definitely fulfilled, and there is no lessening of confidence." Yet she was unable to explain or retell the content of Fanya's letters to anyone. To Americans, it all seemed entirely foreign and even incredible. It was difficult to talk about Russian things to the twins, for two years after living in the United States, they only remembered separate incidents of their former life, and were no different from the native children.

In spite of loneliness for her own country, the strangeness of the new, the inadequacy of her language, Vinya was adjusting to America, gaining in confidence, and making progress. "I am getting ahead after all," Vinya thought. In high school she was given credit for her courses in the Soviet school, and her efforts at learning English were marked as superlative. She received a diploma in two years, and was made to feel as good as a regular, American high school graduate.

Working in private employment, earning money, and planning one's own life with it seemed a natural thing to do in the U.S. Vinya did it promptly. She saved forty dollars, found part-time employment, and entered college.

The process of Americanization continued at a natural, rapid rate all through college studies, through working, through social living. Though she was aware of the difference of her background, and felt deeply her source, the

American living was not strange and the difficulties were no longer peculiar or insurmountable.

The twins belonged to the American uncle's family now: they called him "dad" and his wife "mom," and they worked for him while going to school. Vinya, who only visited them once in a while, found out that they still felt the tie of their own family. They asked Vinya about letters from Russia, and themselves wanted to correspond with their brothers and older sister in spite of the language difference.

"You write the letters in English," Vinya suggested, "and I'll translate them for you." Vinya now felt the pleasure of belonging to the United States and at the same time of her source and relation to the Soviet Union.

So years went by, and as Vinya became more involved in professional pursuits and economic adjustment, her correspondence with her sister and brothers in the Soviet Union became less frequent, but it never ceased.

TEN YEARS LATER

My dear Sister!

I think of you often, and wish you'd write oftener and more. I suppose, though, you are right in saying "when we live so far apart, writing a letter becomes unnatural, and receiving one even somewhat of a shock." Yet, even if we are all apart, we'll always have a great deal in common, mainly because we've had common experiences, common sorrow as children.

You ask me about Mulik. He hasn't written me much either, but I'll tell you what I do know. He finished the pedagogical institute in Odessa, and has been teaching his favorite subjects—drama and art—to large classes of chil-

dren. He still adores the theater. He produced some plays at the summer resort where he was on vacation last year. He acted in them, too, and I wish I had seen him! Remember how we all thought Mulik would be a professional actor? But when he was sixteen and ready to leave the Children's Home, the government made a most urgent plea for teachers throughout the whole Soviet Union, and Mulik answered the call. Now he seems quite happy to do theatrical work just in his free time. Oh, yes, the latest about him is that he is finally realizing his greatest ambition, that of being a scientist in biological research. His work for the last five years as a teacher has been so exemplary that he is entitled to pursue his special study. He has already applied to the Second University of Moscow.

I suppose you know a good deal about Zelik, since he started writing you in English last year. Languages and literature are certainly his passion. I see him often and he is such gay company. He is of medium height, robust, and active in many sports. He even won a swimming prize last year. I think he was right not to go on with the Kiev Art Institute after two years of it. Don't you agree? Zelik's accomplishments in art weren't really outstanding, and he wanted to do some more immediately important work for his country, naturally. He didn't give up art completely, but he is a full-time student at the Mining Engineering Institute in Kiev. He is pleased with his courses because most of them have to do with mathematics and drawing, which are natural to him. He stopped to see me not long ago, when he was on his way back from the Don Basin mines where he does his practice work—and he gave me purely poetic descriptions of the mines!

Now, about myself. We are spending most of the summer in the Crimea, the whole family. It is wonderfully

restful here, and I love swimming in the Black Sea. My husband, Kolya, can never rest much. He is eager to get back to his editorial work. He is anxious to get back to the city for another reason, too; he will take an airplane trip, his first one, to Moscow and Leningrad, which is a special reward from the government for outstanding publishing production.

My daughter, Neska, is seven now, and so thoughtful a child, and she also sings a great deal. Thank goodness she is well again! We were so miserable when she was in the hospital with scarlet fever—it was unbearable. And isn't it wonderful, to think we are not living in the days of sheptuhas, those ignorant sorcerers! I wonder if you remember those days, Vinya?

You should see my second daughter, our little Lenina! We call her Lala for short. She is blond, and such a contrast to Neska. Lala is two now, and very lively and amusing. Both the children go to a play school during the day, so I am quite free to enjoy myself and them when they get home.

Soon vacation will be over, and I go back to Kharkov, then back to my library work, back to my studies and my research for the dissertation on Children's Literature in the Ukraine. I hope to finish the dissertation in another year, and then have time to study English. We all study a great deal in the Soviet Union now. We need to!

I've been looking at the picture of the twins, which you sent me. I've been marveling at the American young ladies in their teens! What elegant clothes, and what smartness! I wish the pictures could tell me more of what the twins are like. I feel a real hunger for knowledge about them.

My Neska carried your photograph around all day and sang a Ukrainian song to it, "*Amerikanska Tiotia*," which

is her own spontaneous composition. Even little Lala kept peering at it, pointing her little fat finger to the picture and saying, "This is Tiotia," then turning the picture around and shaking her head—"No Tiotia here!"

A letter from Zelik just arrived, and I'll quote you the main news in it: "I received a government reward for high marks in engineering—it consists of free railway transportation *anywhere* in the Soviet Union during my next vacation! Hurrah! I'll go to the Caucasus, I'll travel along the Volga . . . anywhere . . . Oh, if anyone had told me this would happen when I was a little boy in Repki, I would never believe such a dream! But now it's true."

Oh, I wish he could travel anywhere in the world, and could go to see you. . . . But I do wish you could come to us, Vinya! Seriously! With your American university education, you could certainly do a great deal here!

Your sister,
Fanya

P.S. You made several foreign-sounding mistakes in Russian, in your last letter. Don't forget us!

LETTER FROM VINYA

Fanya, my dear Sister,

I've been digesting your letter all these months, and waiting for a time when I could write you spontaneously, rather than force myself to a perfunctory enumeration of incidents. I am embarrassed at my mistakes in written Russian—it is because I now must breathe hard and feel deep to recall the natural, Russian expressions, and even then I continue making mistakes in the endings—as you, no doubt, found. I have, you see, adopted English for my native language. English is a marvelous, challenging language, Fanya.

You will appreciate the potency of it—wait till you learn it! Yet, I cannot say I speak English perfectly, for I have a detectable foreign accent. But now you say my Russian has foreign mistakes. Which is my native language, then? What a plight! I must try to work my way out of it!

The twins are corresponding with Zelik in English, and you might ask him to translate the letters. Imagine, if you and your younger sisters should meet, you would have no common language, you'd be foreigners to one another . . . how would it feel? So hurry and learn English as you promised you would.

I am glad you are inviting me to come to the Soviet Union rather than asking me to return, for the idea of returning to one's old home town, although very appealing, seems rather sentimental and regressive. I remember how I used to think that your judgments were utterly unsentimental, and how I looked up to you for it! And now I want to avoid being sentimental.

Yet, in a way, I want to come and take part in and take advantage of all the cultural and artistic achievements in the Soviet Union, but I am not convinced of my own maturity as an American to justify such an important step. Then, too, in spite of my educational and professional work, my earnings are still small and I cannot afford a journey to the S.U. But I want to do it very much. I am confident of finding a way. I am sure that the twins share this desire, and the feeling that we all come from one family, and will not forget one another.

With all good wishes,

Vinya

LETTER FROM ZELIK

Dear Sister:

I hope this letter gets to you, as you've been changing your address quite frequently.

I live in the dormitory for mining engineering students. It is very nice—the rooms are clean, and everything is orderly. I am studying very hard as I want very much to become a good engineer. We have a tremendous need for engineering construction in the Soviet Union. The Americans have done a great deal in this field and must have many technical publications. I wish I could get hold of some. Maybe you would be good enough to send me a book or magazines on mining engineering. I wrote you before that I am studying English and read quite well—but the only books in English I can get are fiction. So, please, if it is possible for you, and not against regulations, send me some recent technical literature—I'd be so grateful and will in turn send you any books you want in Russian. How about a Sholokhov novel? Just tell me what you like—I have money to get it for you.

You mustn't think that I study all the time. Oh, no—only most of the time! The rest of the time I pursue my interests in literature and art, and, of course, chess. In the evenings I sometimes go for a walk in the park or somewhere else.

Tonight I was out walking with a girl. We climbed a hill and walked around it, and then went to the stadium to watch the Young Pioneers celebration. You should have seen the beautiful dancing of two hundred children! It was so appealing and exciting.

Ah, it was a beautiful evening in the park, the fence all

covered with greenery, the sweet odor of linden blossoms in the air, and flowers everywhere:

And now, I await your letter, in which you must write me fully of your ambitions, and your work and your enjoyments.

Your brother, Z.G.

These letters continued to flow between the two countries; letters of sharing, and of constant curiosity on both sides. And these communications between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics reflected the problems and the promises, the great personal endeavor and trust on both sides.



"Like every American," the author says, "I have been amazed, delighted, and vaguely alarmed, too, at the towering successes of this new Russia. Anything one does not know is alarming. I began to ask myself, 'What sort of people are these Russians now?' I have never been interested in politics because I do not consider politics basic. Politics, like religion, depends entirely upon the people behind it. It is the people I want to know.

"I wanted to see Russia through the eyes of a Russian. I must find a Russian, a real one, not a surface-skinned one, but someone who had grown up in this new Russia.

"They are not easy to find in the United States. First of all, I had to eliminate any Communist, because Communists, like all other human beings with causes and religions, put their cause first. I wanted to find someone who was a Russian first, not a Communist.

"Then I thought of Masha."

Masha is the wife of the American correspondent, John Scott, and now lives in New York. But she is still Russian, and still close to the peasant life from which she sprang. She is not a Communist. She says proudly, "I am Collective."

She sat through many mornings telling her story in answer to probing questions. From the stenographic record of those conversations this book has been made. It is one of a series of what Pearl Buck calls her "talk books," done with persons from various countries.

THE GREAT HOPE is the story of life in Russia—the old, the new. All Russian adults in their thirties and forties have experienced this life. They were all brought up during the coming and the growing of the Revolution. They were all rocked in the adventure of revolution, and nurtured by colossal work and ready endurance, but equally ready hope.

The author believes that if American people could have frank personal contact with Soviet people, especially in the years of their growth, they would feel an easy acquaintance with them and an eagerness to know them further.

She tells of a family with six children in a Ukrainian village near the city of Chernigov. Though life is seemingly untroubled for the children, fundamental tzarist oppressions and discrimination affect them, especially the middle one, Vinia, who is seven at the beginning and fifteen at the end of the book.

When the Revolution comes, it, too, affects the children who assimilate it through their living. The Red Army, the counter-revolutionary invasion, the famine, banditism, life in a Soviet children's home, the concepts of communism, all come into the life of the family.

This is a true story, and the author's own.

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY



124 492

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY